Athol Fugard: His Dramatic Work with Special Reference to His Later Plays

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Abstract

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In the introduction, the writer highlights Fugard's regional artistry, his authentic reflection and recreation of a nation's tormented soul. The first chapter deals with Fugard's early plays, revealing the embryonic playwright and those characteristics of imagery, construction, language and content to be developed and refined in later plays. Briefly examined within this context are No-Good Friday, Nongogo and Tsotsi, the playwright's only novel. A chapter on the Port Elizabeth plays written in Fugard's apprenticeship years, The Blood Knot, Hello and Goodbye and Boesman and Lena, focuses on his growing skill as a dramatist, his involvement in his milieu both geographically and emotionally, as well as providing detailed analysis of the plays in terms of major features such as national politics, universal values, existentialism and Calvinism. The period of collaboration in which Fugard responded to the suggestions, imaginative projections and creative stimulus

of his actors, forms the content of a chapter devoted to detailed study of the improvised plays: The Coat, Orestes, Sizwe Bansi is Dead, and The Island. The later Port Elizabeth plays, A Lesson from Aloes and "Master Harold"...and the boys, are explored from political and personal perspectives respectively, with attention paid to the intensely human dramas that dominate even the overtly ideological considerations. A chapter on the television and film scripts--The Occupation, Mille Miglia, The Guest, Marigolds in August--traces Fugard's involvement in these media, his economy of verbal descriptions and his taut control of his material generally. A chapter is devoted to Fugard's women, the characters who present affirmative points of view, whose courage, compassion and determination infuse a hostile world with a range of possibilities beyond survival and existence. Milly in People are Living There, Frieda in Statements After An Arrest Under The Immorality Act and Miss Helen in The Road to Mecca form a Fugardian sorority of survivors. The final chapter of the thesis is devoted to Dimetos, regarded as an intensely personal artistic statement, an examination of the dramatist's alter-ego, the playwright's persona.

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1. Introduction

In South Africa, an authentic voice recounts in poetry and prose the visions of a playwright. The sounds, shapes and smells of a harsh terrain are reflected in the dramatic works of Athol Fugard.

His territory is that of the South African heart and mind - the landscape of a people's psyche. The country's soul -- with its schisms, factions, facts and fantasies -- is the region he explores in plays that mirror contemporary reality. Fugard, his insight honed by a lifetime of conflict with South African authorities, including the withdrawal of his passport and the censorship of his plays, has sharpened his observations on a personal whetstone of hostilities and antagonisms. He has taken up his pen not with the fervour of a social critic or reformer but primarily with the passion of a story-teller. This compulsion has characterised his creative process and has ensured his work's universal appeal and validity, notwithstanding regionally accented English, the liberal use of indigenous language and a range of portraits instantly recognizable to any South African.

The stories he has told, in words resonant with the ambiguity of poetry, have been tales reflecting South Africa in all its complexity: the absurdity of laws that wreck hopes and dreams, loves and lives; the segmented apartheid world dividing man from man as in The Blood Knot, and man from woman as in Statements After An Arrest Under The Immorality Act; and the gulf cleaving haves from havenots subtly characterised in Hello and Goodbye.

His hybridised family background has woven together disparate threads of English royalist sentiments (his grandmother) and Calvinist conservatism (his wife's family background as well as his mother's) into the design of a playwright's vision. For Fugard, biography has been destiny. He is the resident of New Bethesda in the Karoo and the sojourner of New Haven in Connecticut. To the inherent understanding derived from background and the intuitive grasp stemming from intimacy with a broad range of people and issues encountered during a lifetime of relatively dissident activity, one must add his ear for dialectal nuances and his eye for authentic detail.

As an artist Fugard has evolved through successive stages of technical expertise based upon a wide-ranging concern with subjects at grassroots level. His plays have germinated from fleeting impressions meticulously recorded in Notebooks that impress with their honesty, precision and probing to essentials. The standards he applies to the community he applies as ruthlessly to himself. He acknowledges complicity and expiates the guilt in a series of plays that proclaim "mea culpa" loudly and clearly. He addresses issues that confront him and threaten to engulf us all, focusing on the victims of society, and its many guises of prejudice, resentment, hatred, fear, deprivation and suffering. Fugard's is the palette of an artist enshrouded by gloom. His personal darkness has been delineated in The Guest, a portrait of Eugène Marais, Afrikaner advocate, scientist, drug addict and naturalist, who expounded a theory of Hesperian depression, the sadness that overwhelms men at sunset. The setting sun and the advent of darkness, suffusing the world with the

omnipresence of mortality, symbolise the dark side of Fugard's spirit. His doom syndrome was reinforced by an addiction to alcohol,[2] which catalysed so many of his plays. It is significant that with abstinence, adhered to for several years, motifs of light and hope have emerged with greater clarity and emphasis, culminating in the effulgence of light imagery central to The Road to Mecca, "the celestial geometry of light and colour"[2] that illuminates Miss Helen's house and heart.

If "Master Harold" ... and the boys is his most openly autobiographical and confessional play, then Mecca comes closest to laying bare the secret fear of the artist that sterility of religion and social norms can threaten creativity. Fugard's career may from one point of view be seen as a description of milestones along his personal route to Mecca, where finally there are self-knowledge, trust, acceptance, belief and light to be found.

For theatregoers exposed to his material as active contributors to his final draft (for his modus operandi stresses dependence on audience response, often resulting in far-reaching additions and subtractions) the meaning of Fugard's personal Mecca is of lesser importance. For us, his literary beneficiaries, the ideas he has nurtured, the plays he has written and the feelings these have engendered world-wide are testimony to an artist and craftsman. It has been a long road from the early faltering efforts, No-Good Friday and Nongogo, to the professionalism of Master Harold and Mecca.

It has been stated that there is a relevance to his works that transcends the topicality of the here and now.

The Blood Knot, first performed in 1961, played to packed houses on Broadway in 1985. The bond forged between brothers, the inter-dependence, needs, desires and dreams, and the external violence that insidiously threatens to disrupt the harmony of their relationship are as riveting 25 years later as they were at first performance. The story of a black man and his light-skinned brother is a microcosmic portrayal in-depth of the South African situation, with its strengths and weaknesses. The brothers' wrong steps are a natural metaphor for the larger collisions of mankind. As a reviewer once noted:

> It is this pained acuity about the buffeting nature of daily life, even more than his passionate denunciation of the social system in his native South Africa, that makes Fugard the greatest active playwright in the English-speaking world.[3]

Five years after Blood Knot, Fugard focused on a brother/sister relationship, an intense two-hander entitled Hello and Goodbye, depicting the poor white fringes of Port Elizabeth society, probing Calvinist hypocrisy and positing, if only tentatively, the redemptive power of love. The final play in this early Port Elizabeth trilogy, Boesman en Lena, is the work closest to Fugard and, on his own admission, frankly autobiographical. As close as the Crossroads of the 1980s, it portrays the "coloured" person dispossessed of this land, the squatters, their shacks and lives demolished by the whiteman's bulldozers and laws. It is an indictment of a society in which there are people regarded as "surplus", living on discarded waste, whiteman's rubbish. "Vrot! This piece of world is rotten"[4] Lena exclaims, understanding that by association she and Boesman are dehumanized into society's waste products.

With his involvement in the Serpent Players, a Port

Elizabeth group of Black actors he guided and directed, Fugard broached new techniques, ideas and ground. Influenced by Polish director J. Grotowski's concept of "poor theatre" which advocates few, if any, external trappings to distract from the script, Fugard improvised dialogue in workshop settings, where the actors' township experiences meshed with his literary expertise and sense of structure in joint authorship of texts that constituted a separate epoch in his creative life. With The Coat, Sizwe Bansi is Dead and The Island, he partly relinquished his autonomy as dramatist. Sizwe Bansi and The Island, written collaboratively with Winston Ntshona and John Kani, introduced white South Africans to a world from which they were excluded by censorship and segregation. It was shock therapy for thousands viewing for the first time the sad and sordid reality of black lives. Through Fugard's pioneering efforts, theatre in South Africa became a vehicle for communication, establishing a tradition of free expression not feasible beyond the bounds of the stage. For the first time, white South Africans heard Kani improvise comments on the headlines of the day. The black man's voice was heard, and through Fugard it reached beyond the confines of the auditorium. Sizwe Bansi dealt primarily with the iniquity of the pass laws, recently removed from the statute books of the Republic together with the Mixed Marriages and Immorality Acts, the latter providing the framework of his play Statements After An Arrest Under the Immorality Act. The repeal of these laws does not invalidate the plays. They might have been the raison d'etre of Fugard's thematic material but his evaluation of relationships, his depiction of human pain, the pity and pathos of it all still

stands as testimony to the strength of ordinary people to sustain trials. As a compassionate dramatist, he and his audiences bear witness to these legally induced tragedies and social upheavals, giving thereby a recognisable face and a human name to suffering. It is a bleak and desolate area. As Errol states in phrases that wring the last drop of gall from an embittered life:

> So I tell God I don't smoke and I don't drink and I know the price of bread. But he says it makes no difference and that he wants back what is left. And then I start to give him the other parts. I give him my feet and my legs, I give him my head and body, I give him my arms, until at last there is nothing left, just my hands, and they are empty. But he takes them back too. And then there is only the emptiness left.[5]

What matters is that in the emptiness there are Fugard's voice and the mute (but real) presence of his audiences bearing witness. Such witness amounts in a different guise to the age-old religious testimony that validates suffering and the tortured existence of man.

Fugard's screenplays reveal a different dimension of his art, an economy of well-chosen words used as an adjunct to carefully contrived visual images realised through the direction of Ross Devenish. Together, the Devenish/Fugard team have produced Boesman and Lena, The Guest and Marigolds in August. The former script was an adaptation of the original text whereas the latter two were written for the filmic medium. The Guest encapsulates the Afrikaner experience in Africa, with its weaknesses and strengths, whereas Marigolds is a visionary text highlighting the erosion of fundamental human freedoms resulting from the stringent application of apartheid laws. It is a philosophical play probing the nature of life

and the means of survival in a setting rendered unnatural by ideology. If Fugard deduces a moral imperative from marigolds planted unseasonably in August, blighted by adverse conditions, he draws a relatively optimistic conclusion from yet another hardier South African plant species. In A Lesson from Aloes he concerns himself with survival mechanisms that enable one to succeed where another fails, the implication being that "If those aloes can survive droughts, so can he!"[6]

There is an overall consistency in the pattern of Fugard's work. His men and women are victims but not failures. Their lives, however tormented, add worth and understanding to human experience. There is an irrepressible vitality at the heart of Fugard's characters, especially his women, who can laugh affirmatively and even joyously in the midst of setbacks that would shatter others. Through Milly in People are Living There, Lena in Boesman and Lena, and Frieda in Statements, Fugard constructs a blood-line that finally generates his triumphant Miss Helen and her feminist friend, Elsa, in Mecca. "Open your arms and catch me! I'm going to jump!" Elsa exclaims at the end of Mecca.[7] Both women, despite the collapse of their hopes and dreams, are prepared to trust and love each other.

When Fugard withdraws from the overt South African scene, as he does in Dimetos, it is to a relatively inaccessible plane which is yet suffused with a philosophic and poetic quality peculiarly his own. Dimetos is a complex personality, intellectually conscious of the need to give and take within a relationship, yet emotionally stunted by rapacious and demeaning desires. Arguably Dimetos is Fugard, the

philospher/poet stalking the shores of Schoenmakerskop, withdrawn from society yet preoccupied with the enigmas of life.

The roles of giver and receiver come into focus in The Drummer, a short play devised by Fugard in 1980. It reveals a joyousness, a sense of self and an intoxicating freedom one is unable to detect in that combination elsewhere in his work. As with so many of Fugard's characters, the drummer exists on the fringes of society -- he is a hobo beating a tattoo with a pair of drumsticks on a trash can. His serious intention, conveyed by the resonant bin, produces a decided effect. Conceivably this might be a symbol for Fugard's role as creative writer in society. He is indeed beating a drum and the sounds produced, an incantation to freedom, individuality, dignity and equality, prompt profound responses. It is an African characteristic to transform objects spontaneously into musical instruments. That Fugard's drummer uses a trash can would be regarded as conventional within African parameters, despite the fact that he is located in New York. The drummer's transmutation of the waste of society -- and by implication the waste elements and people of his world -- into an aesthetic code of striking sounds, is a metaphor for the task of the imaginative playwright, who gives out signals of hope, light, faith, trust and ultimately love where formerly despair and darkness prevailed.

There have been several critical evaluations of this playwright, notably Athol Fugard, a pioneering volume edited in 1982 by Stephen Gray, which has served as a reliable and valuable research source for some years. This is, however,

an amalgam of different views from a broad range of contributors, with all the strengths and weaknesses inherent in such a compilation. Dennis Walder's study, Athol Fugard, published in 1984, provides an excellent introduction to Fugard's plays and has considerable merit in critical terms. Its scope is relatively limited, however, and its comment cursory. It just does not go far enough. Russell Vandenbroucke's authoritative book, Truths the hand can touch: The Theatre of Athol Fugard is a well researched and documented study. It is thorough, detailed and comprehensive, and has the effect of firmly placing Fugard in the forefront of twentieth century drama.

One of Vandenbroucke's major theses, argued cogently and convincingly, is that the importance of Fugard's South African nationality has been exaggerated. He writes:

> For far too long critics and audience have mistakenly equated the South African context of Fugard's plays with their ultimate subject and have thereby emphasised the specifics with which he starts rather than the universal with which he ends.[8]

Vandenbroucke's perspective which is opposed to the specificity espoused by earlier critics, is provocative and welcome if it stimulates reappraisal. The writer of this thesis, however, firmly believes that the truth falls somewhere between these two poles of particularity and universality. The mud between Lena's toes is that of Swartkops and the earth beneath Fugard's feet is that of his homeland. Fugard is a man bred of his time and of his place, bringing his vision to bear on what he knows and understands best. However, his art contains insights relevant to all men everywhere.

Robert Kavanagh's study, Theatre and Cultural Struggle

in South Africa, in which he evaluates Fugard's interaction with black intellectuals in the Sophiatown era, has an ideological perspective and a commitment to Marxist criteria in his assessment of art generally. He believes that theatre should be used in South Africa as a means of "mass organization, mobilisation and conscientization"[9] and his use of quotations by Lenin, Marx and Engels stresses the Party approach to art, "that it be evaluated from the position of the revolutionary class,"[10] that "literature must become part of the common cause of the proletariat..."[11], and that "the theatre we create and perform must be revolutionary in function."[12] It is the view of the writer of this thesis that Kavanagh's approach constitutes a pre-judgement of Fugard's work.

The intention here is to concentrate on Fugard's texts as a form of primary data, allowing them to be dominant in each literary critical assessment. Close textual analysis releases fresh insights and perspectives. The real purpose of the method is to allow meanings in the texts to assume a validity of their own and not to advance ideological considerations. The approach is not exclusively textual. Using ancillary relevant material and a range of background sources, the thesis includes references to biographical, socio-political, philosophical, historical and theological material that together elucidate an explication and understanding of Fugard as a dramatic writer. Fugard's plays ultimately bear witness to humanity's travails and testify to man's indomitable will to survive, to bear witness despite a multiplicity of adverse physical and metaphysical conditions.

References

[1] Marilyn Achiron, "Athol Fugard," in Cosmopolitan, November 1986, p.64: "I'm an alcoholic and I haven't had a drink for three years."

[2] Athol Fugard, The Road to Mecca (London: Faber and Faber, 1985), p.72.

[3] W.A.H.111, "Brothers," in Time, November 1985, p.65.

[4] Athol Fugard, "Boesman and Lena," in Boesman and Lena and Other Plays (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), p.240.

[5] Athol Fugard, "Statements After An Arrest Under The Immorality Act," in Statements (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), pp.107-108.

[6] Athol Fugard, A Lesson From Aloes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), p.65.

[7] Fugard, Mecca, p.79.

[8] Russell Vandenbroucke, Truths the hand can touch: The Theatre of Athol Fugard (Craighall: AD. Donker, 1986), p.11.

[9] Robert Mshengu Kavanagh, Theatre and Cultural Struggle in South Africa (London: Zed Books, 1985) p.X.

[10] Kavanagh, p.XIII.

[11] Kavanagh, p.XIII.

[12] Kavanagh, p.XV.

2. Fugard's Early Work

The early creative efforts of Fugard consist not only of the published apprenticeship plays: No-Good Friday (1958), Nongogo (1959) and his novel, Tsotsi (1960-62), but his "suppressed juvenilia," his earliest work: The Cell and Klaas and the Devil, which evoked no response in London (1959), and a political allegory based on the search of the three wise men for the virgin birth, a play written in London (1959).

Fugard's first attempt at playwriting was The Cell, a one-act piece in blank verse, based on a news story about a black woman who was arrested and gave birth to a stillborn baby in prison. The play's premiére was at a small amateur theatre in Cape Town in May 1957. The cast consisted of the woman, another black prisoner in an adjoining cell and a chorus of three. It was followed by Klaas and the Devil, a prose play about a fishing village on the South African coast, an attempt to set Synge's Riders from the Sea within an Afrikaner setting. Entered in a Cape Town drama festival, the judges were highly critical of the play.[1] Aside from these bare statistics, the absence of scripts precludes any contemporary critical response. Although Sheila Fugard has copies of both The Cell and Klaas and the Devil, Fugard, convinced of their pretentious nature, has forbidden that they be shown to anyone. The title, The Cell, in its forbidding brevity suggestive of curtailed freedom, resonates

almost twenty years later in Fugard's choice of title for his play about prison life, The Island.

After his encounter with the explosive mix of Sophiatown culture, politics and personalities, Fugard and his wife travelled to England in Autumn 1959, where he made the rounds with his plays, including a new one written in South Africa A Place with the Pigs, his first attempt at an Immorality Act story centres on the reaction of an Afrikaans community to a man involved with a coloured woman, a relationship he reverses 13 years later in Statements After An Arrest Under The Immorality Act, which describes the love affair between a spinsterish white librarian and a coloured schoolteacher, clearly a theme with which Fugard was preoccupied for a considerable period. While in London Fugard joined forces with Tone Brulin, a Belgian theatre director whom he had met in South Africa, to form a company called New Africa Group, which travelled through the Low Countries. Fugard wrote a biblical allegory at this time but it was neither performed nor published and it "has vanished from the face of the earth, and good riddance," he said.[2] Fugard, conscious of the shortcomings of his early work, dismissed his plays as devoid of technique and craftsmanship.[3]. Although Fugard regarded No-Good Friday and Nongogo as imitative and derivative (William Faulkner, Tennessee Williams, O'Neill, Odets), Oxford University Press published them together with Dimetos in 1977. They reveal Fugard's fascination with the violence, excitement, tempo and urgency of black life in Sophiatown, "then still a lusty, slummy township."[4]

The Fugards moved to Johannesburg in 1958 and Athol's

contact with Sophiatown was a turning point as well as source material for No-Good Friday and Nongogo. It was a world ostensibly ruled by gangsters. In Johannesburg in the fifties crime was a day-to-day reality, and Sophiatown was the nucleus of all reef crimes. The gangs took what they wanted; raw mineworkers were easy victims for the tsotsis who meted out violence to those who resisted. The tsotsi-taal of the era was enriched and coloured by the melodrama of movie-language, as the cinema was a major contributor to Sophiatown culture. Movies influenced musicians and bandsmen developed a style incorporating African melody and rhythm with the cadences of American swing and jitterbug. The Church had a powerful effect on the lives of Sophiatown residents and the huge Anglican Church of Christ dominated the town. Clergymen such as Father Trevor Huddleston and Bishop Ambrose Reeves tried to show that the crime rate was related to poor conditions and racist policies and to awaken the conscience of white South Africa. In the political arena it was a time and a place for defiance culminating in the "We won't move" campaign of 1955 against the Sophiatown removals. The removal of all the families and the physical destruction of Sophiatown took several years and, as Father Huddleston wrote: "When Sophiatown is finally obliterated and its people scattered, I believe that South Africa will have lost not only a place but an ideal."[5]

It was these elements that sparked Fugard's interest and imagination, as well as the company of men who "had visions: to escape their environment; to oppose and overcome their context; to evade and out-distance their destiny by

hard work and sacrifice by education and native ability."[6] The important feature of Sophiatown was that there were few enforced barriers between people of different colours and races; the churches fostered intermingling, and multi-racial gatherings were commonplace. Fugard found himself spending more time in this social, political and cultural whirlpool than in the relatively staid and intellectually sterile Johannesburg.

No-Good Friday

No-Good Friday accurately reflects the ferment of ideas and the tenour of township life as they impacted on the playwright, "human defiance of what is apparently meaningless,"[7] the stand on a moral issue of a small man against the giants of his place and his time, tough gangsters. As Margaret Munro points out, No-Good Friday showed "black realities to whites and in 1958 established the validity of black daily experience as subject matter for drama."[8] It is the theatre of working people, filled with their exuberance, rhythms and music, an acute picture of a place and a time in the panorama of South African history. And unlike Fugard's later works that tend to focus on a few characters in settings of relative social isolation, the large cast with which he almost overloads the stage creates an historical perspective of ordinary people caught up in a pernicious and universally debilitating system. Acquiesence in or revolt against the dominant tyranny, in this instance black-on-black mafia-style gangsterism, is the central issue Fugard explores with the

depth and sensitivity so characteristic of this playwright. Throughout the play, however, we never lose sight of the social system prevailing in Sophiatown, the background against which the human drama relentlessly unfolds. At times the characters are dwarfed by these larger realities, universals such as rural economic depression that prompts an exodus to the towns and mines with their employment prospects. Backyard characters afford pertinent and provocative glimpses of racial stereotyping, the black man submissively apologetic before the white boss, the unwilling victim of an unjust social order as well as an oppression enforced by black opportunists. The two faces of corruption, white and black, feature prominently, the former implicitly and the latter explicitly, two sides of the South African coin. The evils of black gangsterism, the heartless exploitation of those it seeks "to protect" that succeeds in silencing protest as well as and as efficiently as the apartheid system emasculates the downtrodden masses, is at the core of this play. Both systems--the protection racket of Shark and his bully boys and the wider political framework--debase human experience. "I know life is 'cheap' here" says Father Higgins.[9] The point Fugard makes dramatically is that life is cheap precisely because the system is corrupt. Every country in its large cities has its gangsters with their weapons. As Father Huddleston noted: "The tsotsi is youth rotting away, and rotting with fear the society around him. He is problem number one in urban Africa."[10]

We are neither shown nor told the consequences of Willie's stand against Shark and his predatory henchmen but what matters is his decision to resist, to say unequivocally where the rot ends. Willie's resistance, reporting Tobias' murder to the police, is foredoomed, to be met not only by the official indifference of those who viewed the black man as "a different category, another species living in a world apart"[11] but also inevitably with gangster vengeance. For Father Huddleston, the tsotsi with his knife and revolver, a noticeable feature of African urban life, was the supreme symbol of a society which did not care, "a rotten social order, corrupted through and through by the false ideology of racialism, of apartheid, of white supremacy."[12]

Although Fugard's canvas is broad, encompassing twelve characters who individually and collectively widen the scope and substance of the story, he is primarily concerned with the archetypal conflict of good versus evil, which he projects in unrelieved and stark terms. The stage set concretizes the moralist theme, suggesting in visual terms two separate realms, highlighting the assumption that Fugard conceives his dramas in physical as well as intellectual terms, a thesis expounded by Margaret Munro.[13] To the writer of this thesis, the backyard in Sophiatown is the public arena of debate, confrontation and violence, whereas the door to Willie's house is the entrance to decent living and the introduction to a different value system where diligence, application,

education and integrity are esteemed and practised. It is in Willie's room that the man/woman interaction takes place; it is here that bread is shared with Guy in a display of true charity; that contact with the church's creed of compassion and bearing witness is made and, finally, it is an area uncontaminated by external evil, reflecting the conscience of a man refusing to violate his code of ethics. "You don't go into my house .... It's clean," Willie admonishes Shark (No-Good Friday, p. 157). The stage set firmly demarcates the division between honour and dishonour, virtue and vice, strength and weakness, good and evil. Strong-arm tactics outside contrast with a helping hand inside. Corruption out there is offset by an inner search for ideals, the quest that informs both "Master Harold"...and the boys and The Road to Mecca with transcendent hope and light.

Elements of truth that triumph in Fugard's later plays, especially man's capacity to dream of brighter, better worlds, are defeated by the harsh realities of Sophiatown life. "Don't you dream?" Guy asks Willie. "I woke up a long time ago," he replies in accents that foreshadow Hally's bitter brand of cynicism (No-Good Friday, p. 137). As Dennis Walder points out, dreams are dangerous for the black man.[14] Yet Walder errs in classifying Tobias as a dreamer whose presence therefore constitutes a challenge. Tobias is undeniably a rural innocent, a peasant unwise in worldly ways. It is Willie, despite his protestations to the contrary, who is the real dreamer, envisioning a small man's stand against overwhelming odds and fate, a Fugardian darkness, annihilation and death. For Tobias the distinction is between hopes and

reality, expectations of a better life frustrated by township violence and brutality; for Willie there is the difference between dreams and illusions.

Closely allied to these themes are the characteristics ostensibly personified in Watson and Father Higgins respectively. In the first performance of the play in August 1958 at the Bantu Mens' Social Centre, Fugard took the part of Higgins, the play's only white character, who commits himself to individual action yet remains impotently peripheral to the vortex of evil, a true reflection of Fugard's own position vis-à-vis Sophiatown. Lewis Nkosi recalls that in the Sophiatown period of 1958-59:

> Athol Fugard gave no signs of being directly interested in politics. Indeed, one might say he rather despised politics and politicians. If he did not, he certainly distrusted them. Far more directly, Athol was interested in learning about how we lived and in practising his art, and the politics of the South African situation touched him on these two levels.[15]

Father Higgins, white, involved yet detached, predisposed to help yet powerless to effect changes, reflects the role of the church as well as the personal commitment of the playwright to an exotic locality that clearly challenged and concerned him. Unlike the Afrikaans priest in Mecca, Dominee Marius Byleveld, whose very name reflects a potent conjunction with the veld, the earth; Higgins, whose church is "so high you cannot see the cross on the top" (No-Good Friday, p. 136), is clearly an English clergyman, possibly a veiled portrait of Father Trevor Huddleston, an agent provocateur for change, resistance in this case to black domination of blacks. "Father Higgins made us all jumpy talking like that about doing some-

thing," Guy tells Willie (No-Good Friday, p. 148), whom Higgins further provokes with his request for a letter to Tobias' widow, ensuring thereby Willie's profound allegiance to change, the transition from total passivity to passive resistance.

Compared with Willie's painful realisation of where his duties lie, township politics appear superficial and are satirised as such by Fugard, who caricatures the figure of Watson, the politician. He is a puppet preoccupied with clichés and slogans that disregard the plight of Everyman and elevate suspect causes, a man "prepared to put forward a resolution at the next congress, deploring the high incidence of crime and calling for an immediate ..." (No-Good Friday, p. 160), a self-promoting theorist intoxicated with revolutionary ardour. He is not a figure Fugard expects us to view in any light other than denigratory. His textbook rhetoric is pure posturing whereas the full force of polemical issues thrusts through scenes depicting the two-pronged denial of rights, in Sophiatown itself and the white world beyond the black ghetto. In both worlds the black Everyman is without rights. The full glare of scrutiny, however, falls on those rights violated in Sophiatown. Beyond Sophiatown and the white man's world lies the remote rural terrain, where unemployment and poverty spur breadwinners to seek sustenance elsewhere, to infiltrate illegally those urban areas with prospects of work. Fugard uses the letter as a dramatic device to bridge town and country, urban and rural, white civilization and black values; as he does in reverse in The Blood Knot. In both plays a letter is literary connecting tissue to weld together disparate realms; it succeeds not

only in propelling the drama forward through intensified character motivation but also meticulously defines commitments and world views. It conveys the awe of an unsophisticated man confronting civilisation's concrete veneer that masks potential heartlessness and cruelty. Tobias' letter, full of expectations, is disparaged by Willie who knows the brutal realities of life in Sophiatown. The letter contrasts with another that is never written, the letter Father Higgins requests Willie to write to Tobias' widow. These letters, the written and the unwritten, encapsulate Tobias' life and reflect in microcosm the gangsterism of Sophiatown that mindlessly shatters hopes and butchers lives. The second letter is designed by Fugard as a prod, a means to arouse Willie from passivity, to provoke a righteous man, to prompt a protest and finally to elicit, in Fugardian philosophical terms, a witnessing of one man's life and times. For Fugard--and, significantly, Father Higgins--Tobias' death must be recorded in a manner that goes beyond the cold sterility of a death certificate. There must be humanity to offset the forces of evil; there must be compassion for the bereaved to counterbalance the darkness that smothered a man; and finally action--a letter in this case--must rescue the deceased from obscurity and anonymity of a township grave, through memory to give meaning to his life and death. It is a process that disturbs the tenour of Willie's life, moving him to reflections and actions that firstly alienate him from the pragmatists prepared to compromise; and, secondly, damn him to a death we know awaits him but which we never see. As Russell Vandenbroucke observes, the play focuses

on Willie's psyche rather than on his fate at the hands of Shark.[16] Accepting responsibility for the letter to Tobias' widow cements the bond of brotherhood between the dead man and Willie, ensuring continuity of Christian doctrine and belief and strengthening the Fugardian ethos of shared destiny. Finally, it focuses on the playwright's own dilemma in wrestling with language, attempting to convey truths and perceptions and failing to do so, the inadequacy of words to convey true meaning. "Let's leave that for somebody who wants to write a sad story about a black skin," Willie remarks to Guy (No-Good Friday, p. 144) and, ironically, that "somebody" is himself. His own struggle to put it all down is Fugard's creative quest to give life's verities literary and artistic form. "But for this letter I need words and a word is only a wind" (No-Good Friday, p. 136), Tobias remarks with a fervour that reflects Fugard's recognition of and exasperation with the inability of words to create characters and concepts, to destroy opponents and to create an inviolable ideological power base. It is a craftsman's obsession with his materials that characterises Fugard's later plays so strongly and/that is found here in embryonic yet vital form. Willie is a literate man in the process of educating himself just as Fugard was an apprentice playwright tentatively establishing a reputation. In Willie we see Fugard's preoccupation with words and recognition of their potential power. In his community Willie is highly regarded for his command of language and his words rend the fabric of their lives with piercing insight: "Melancholy, loneliness, despair" (No-Good Friday, p. 125), "frustrated" (No-Good Friday, p. 135), words that

contrast with the vocabulary of a man of conscience ultimately making a stand however futile against evil: "Peace, Guy, peace. Peace of mind ... peace of heart" (No-Good Friday, p. 163).

Allied to the use (Willie) and abuse (the propagandist, Watson) of words, is Fugard's thematic use here, as elsewhere in his plays and especially in Master Harold, of music to signify succinctly and successfully on a non-verbal level a variety of meanings. Guy, the jazz musician, epitomizes Sophiatown culture in the fifties, an era in which there was exposure through film to the talents of great musicians, as well as local groups performing American swing. Music signified many things, primarily that people in dreadful situations had moments of the good time and conversely that in those moments there was always the spectre of suffering; music alleviated pain and at the same time conveyed a powerful message. South Africans are familiar with road gangs working to the melodious and harmonious rhythm of African chants, clearly enjoying music that enables them to forget their hard manual labour. Music, too, represents an international language, which all can hear and understand. "Don't forget, Father, it was the negro jazz bands that first breached the colour bar in the States," Yehudi Menuhin told Father Huddleston,[17] who started the Huddleston Jazz Band in Sophiatown. These aspects coalesce in Guy, who improvises "Friday Night Blues. Inspired by an empty pocket" (No-Good Friday, p. 125), sad music that assumes a hymnal tone with which the play ends, a finale that approximates in intention and mood the last sequence of Master Harold. And just as Master Harold,

written 24 years later, is less about Master Harold and more about Sam, the black man of integrity, so No-Good Friday is dominated by Willie whose spiritual anguish and its resolution lies at the heart of the play. "There's no excuse like saying the world's a big place and I'm just a small little man. My world is as big as I am. Just big enough for me to do something about it" (No-Good Friday, p. 161), Willie admonishes his friends in tones strongly foreshadowing those of Sam Semela. Willie and Sam Semela share another trait, a drive to self-education and improvement that is so much more than blatant ambition. It enables them to stand aside from the education for servitude of their contemporaries prescribed by the Bantu Education Act of April 1st 1955. When introducing the Bill, Dr H. F. Verwoerd stated: "if the native in South Africa to-day, in any kind of school in existence, is being taught to expect that he will live his adult life under a policy of equal rights, he is making a big mistake."[18] Both Willie and Sam move towards wider horizons. Theirs is the drive that characterised the friends of Can Themba, men with visions of escaping their environment through work and education.[19]

Willie's actions are less a "one-man crusade against crime" (No-Good Friday, p. 162), as Guy alleges, than the spiritual conflict of a man of conscience doing what he believes to be right, a man "sick of running away" (No-Good Friday, p. 153). No-Good Friday is interesting to any student of Fugard for its emphasis on black exploitation of blacks. Fugard covered mental and emotional territory before he encapsulated later /the black man's suffering within the corruption

of apartheid society. As Walder notes with accuracy, Fugard is concerned here with the cost of survival under extreme conditions and the idea that role-playing is essential for survival.[20] No-Good Friday provides a convincing kaleidoscopic picture of township life in the fifties. Fugard did not, however, adopt a strongly radicalized perspective. Willie blames himself not the system, an approach that displeased Lewis Nkosi, who asserted that Fugard "posed the wrong questions and provided the wrong answers."[21] It is precisely this focus on the personal rather than the political that gives No-Good Friday its poignancy and undoubted dramatic strength. "Even in their failures (they) do not make environment or circumstances an excuse," wrote Father Trevor Huddleston. "It needs the kind of virtue which most European Christians in South Africa have never come within a mile of."[22] Despite Fugard's assertion that it was immature, gauche and derivative,[23] the play still holds interest for any student of Fugard, prefiguring later work in its thematic development, characterisation and imagery.

Nongogo

As a slice of township life, Nongogo, the story of a former prostitute who runs a shantytown bar, a shebeen, is as socially relevant and challenging now as it was in 1959 when first written and performed for small private audiences. Revived at intervals--in Sheffield, England, in 1974; and in Johannesburg in 1981--it revealed Fugard as a writer with

a need to say certain things and to say them unequivocally. As the play that directly followed No-Good Friday, it explores similar themes yet the difference in approach demonstrates Fugard's development in terms of craft, shaping experiences with greater economy and skill; effectively reducing the large cast to the psychological two-hander so central to his later plays; and generally exploring issues with greater competence and maturity. Whereas the evil of physical violence hangs over No-Good Friday, Fugard concerns himself in Nongogo primarily with psychological violations, the assault on human minds and the rape of human hearts. If anything, the playwright's pessimism informs Nongogo with a fatalism that weighs heavily on the destiny of his characters to a far greater extent than in No-Good Friday. Whereas Willie symbolises man's active, determined and conscientious rejection of social evils, Queeny and Johnny are defeated in their efforts to remake their lives and relapse into stereotypic patterns. They cannot throw off the weight of their past. Fugard tells us here that the corruption of their bodies has infected their souls. It requires the absolution of redemptive love to cleanse and rehabilitate these whores, a love of which Johnny is, as yet, incapable.

That Queeny not only nurtures the desire for personal change but also manifests a magnanimity of spirit towards others and a strength of purpose to effect the longed for metamorphosis, augurs well for the destiny of women shackled by economic necessity and sociological phenomena they cannot cast off at this stage. It is noteworthy, however, that Queeny possesses this drive, a movement towards positive change

that foreshadows Fugard's long line of affirmative women, central characters in his later plays. Queeny is undoubtedly a not undistinguished forebear of Lena, Hester and Milly. Her resemblance to Hester is startling and it is more than coincidence that both look in vain for inspiration to a man called Johnny. There is unbroken continuity between Queeny and Hester, a bloodline of the heart that links these two prostitutes, one black the other white. Fugard's obsessive interest in names, a dominant theme in this play, signifies here a desire to create a new identity and life: the shebeen queen can no longer be called "Rose," the harlot flower miners plucked for 2/6d, but rather "Queeny," the sovereign of an independent shebeen, regal in her upward mobility.

As Barry Ronge observed, these shebeen queens were not mercenary prostitutes and bootleggers "raking in the shekels by ripping off township dwellers."[24] The first female entrepreneurs of the township, they expressed the dilemma of the contemporary black woman looking for personal and financial independence in a confused environment. Queeny, out of the mire and on her way up, recognizes that "you can't wash your mind as easily as your hands"[25] but she is prepared to try. Alton Kumalo viewed Queeny as big and strong and the play as tragic and operatic.[26] Her efforts to restructure her life do assume magnitude and meaning that lift her beyond the confines of her small shebeen. Her doomed attempt to relate to Johnnie in a man/woman love relationship, personifies human defiance of prejudice and pain. Queeny admires "people trying to do something with their lives" (Nongogo, p. 73) and she is filled with irrepressible hope. Unlike Hester

and Johnnie who unpack the past, Johnny's suitcase spills a rainbow of colours, hope and the future onto the shebeen floor, a vision that temporarily obscures the grit and grime of her everyday world.

Change, the central theme of upward mobility, rising from the gutter and a compromising lifestyle to attain relative affluence, is presented by Fugard as a potentially liberating process that is regrettably thwarted by man's inability to forget and forgive. Johnny, tarnished as a youth by rampant homosexual exploitation in the miners' compound, craves pristine purity in his life. Sam's accurate observation: "The fastidious kind, that don't like chewing on a bone after all the other dogs taken the meat off" (Nongogo, p. 99), bodes ill for the realisation of Queeny's dreams. Johnny, burdened with his own shame, can never accommodate hers. He can brighten her room with colour but he cannot "re-decorate" her life. His desire "to make life better," to "make waking up tomorrow a little bit easier" (Nongogo, p. 80), is a self-oriented goal, a palliative measure to obscure the dirt and deaden the pain. It is, however, a selfish therapy. Physically abused and mentally traumatised, he cannot integrate Queeny's sordid past into his world view. Acceptance is beyond him not only because her past mirrors his own, her presence a painful reminder of what he longs to forget, but also an inherent mistrust of humanity, mistrust born of past pain, inhibits any meaningful relationship. "I suppose the only time you're really safe is when you can tell the rest of the world to go to hell," he tells Queeny (Nongogo, p. 105). Despite Fugard's deprecatory comments

about these characters as two-dimensional stereotypes in obvious and clichéd dilemmas,[27] he reveals in Nongogo an ability to interweave expectations and revelations in a design that commands attention not only dramatically but technically. There is control over the ebb and flow of hopes and dreams, Queeny's never coinciding with Johnny's, that sustains interest and tension. Finally, Queeny, who temporarily abandoned realism for idealism, recognises that Johnny is a false messiah, damning rather than saving: "The miracle of Jesus and the dead body. You've brought it back to life. The warmth of your hate, the breath of your disgust has got it living again" (Nongogo, p. 114), she states scathingly. Ironically, Johnny's evangelising moral tone evokes a positive response in Queeny, which his condemnation cruelly destroys. Vehemently she reverts to type, the real tart back in business. She cannot escape being Nongogo, a term used especially for prostitutes soliciting among the lines of gold-mine workers queuing for their pay, a woman for two-and-six. Here, as in the later plays, names not only baptize but stigmatize. Johnny, in his dogmatic passion for precision and clarity, "There is a name for everything" (Nongogo, p. 113), is clearly Piet Bezuidenhout's less than distinguished antecedent in literary terms. Whereas Piet's obsession to identify and name a species is a thinly veiled proclamation of ownership and belonging, Johnny's nomenclature is a rigid uncompromising classification. In his eyes Nongogo, with its unsavoury connotations, obliterates "Rose" and "Queeny." Although Fugard makes no value judgements, Queeny's disappointment is our own. The tart with the heart, who unhesitatingly

and generously backed Johnny's business venture hoping for personal dividends to enrich an emotionally sterile life, is, as Alton Kumalo observed, "big and pompous, and when she drops, what a fall!"[28] Her escapist dream was just that, as any audience might deduce from the sinister intrusion of archetypal Fugardian motifs consistently presented throughout the play; the relentless passage of time curtailing human dreams, a process suggested visually and dramatically by the appearance of Blackie with a clock that chimes as fatally for Queeny as it does for Milly in People are Living There. "That thing's crazy. Why do you carry it around if it don't tell the time?" she asks Blackie (Nongogo, p. 85). "But you don't listen," he replies ominously. Blackie, as his name suggests, appears as some figure of mortality, a dark ever-present reminder of death, whether of hopes or of life itself, whose emblem, the clock, "sings like the church" (Nongogo, p. 85). This momento mori theme is sadly reinforced when Queeny gives Johnny a wristwatch as a gift, ironically and accurately a farewell present.

Nongogo is a long play and one that could benefit with judicious pruning, yet it contains much of value for the Fugard researcher who, familiar with the broad sweep of his works, returns to this Sophiatown period as an explorer to the river source. Nongogo reveals Fugard's consistent pre-occupation with the word, in its genesis, its ontology and its sound. Words such as "freedom" (Nongogo, p. 74) and "decent" (Nongogo, p. 96) run thematically through the play's sub-text. Fugard's involvement with the word is ritualistic, words transmuted to iconography: "The Word was made flesh

and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory."[29]

Here, as elsewhere, there is the passing shadow of a man "picking out a melancholy little theme on his guitar" (Nongogo, p. 110), a man walking the streets to nowhere, whose music with its unattainable harmony drives Johnny to a point of desperation. It is of note that all Patrick possesses after his drinking binge is a sixpence, that cannot buy him or his family anything, whereas Willie's sixpence in Master Harold buys jukebox balm to heal emotional wounds. Throughout Nongogo the astute reader may glean hints of Fugardian themes, concerns and issues to be consistently developed, debated and resolved in the years ahead. Notwithstanding the acknowledged influence of American playwrights, the play is peculiarly and characteristically his own. Nongogo is set in what is exclusively a black man's world, filled with tensions generated by the black man's self-lacerating rage. It is, however, not a photographic or mirror image but Fugard's re-invention of lives perceived through his eyes and materialised through his artistry. Margaret Munro criticises the absence of black/white tension, "the backbone of colonial society," and the absence of a potent visual image comparable to that of Zach and Morris in their shack in The Blood Knot.[30] However, the inequity of a socio/political dispensation that fostered a migrant labour system and other evils is Nongogo's framework of reference. As in No-Good Friday, its strength lies in the close scrutiny of characters making their way despite the odds against them. Even Johnny, who categorically blames a system that herds men together like animals in mining compounds, pulls himself up by his bootstrings, as does Queeny,

to make something of his life. For all the darkness and depression, there is man's instinct for survival. In Fugard's script glimmerings of faith flicker determinedly through a chiaroscuro presentation of hope, despair, dreams and reality. In hands other than Fugard's, it might have been "a conventional story of a woman with a past she tries to hide but cannot."[31]

Nongogo, however, enables us to see Queeny, Johnny and their cohorts clearly and intensely. As Peter Brook observed of theatre on British Television in 1976:

> It is not an abstraction from the world; it is right within the world. Therefore all the factors that make up all the grit of the everyday world have to be present, and everything that softens, that dilutes this grit, takes away from the possibility of that change in perception happening. When that happens, the perception of the actor, the perception of the spectator, is one and the same. Everyone is perceiving at the same intensity. And therefore what you receive is there for life.[32]

In Nongogo Fugard explores and expresses township life, succeeding in understanding a realm not his own and through that comprehension creating dignity for people and respect for their community.

Tsotsi

Fugard's only novel, Tsotsi, is a deeply felt account of one man's awakening to memory and redemption. Proustian minutiae criss-cross the novel, creating a design as intricate, logical and symmetrical as the spider's web in the pipe where the eponymous hero shelters as a child. Written in 1959-60, the period in which Fugard wrote The Blood Knot, the manuscript

remained forgotten until its recovery years later from a suitcase of manuscripts on loan to the National English Literary Museum in Grahamstown. It was edited by Stephen Gray and published in 1980.

As the focus of this thesis is Fugard's plays for stage, film and television, the reader may query the inclusion of Tsotsi for critical evaluation and analysis. While not dealt with in great detail here, the novel is valuable on multiple levels to the student of Fugard. Not only does it embody features characteristic of the playwright, both thematic and stylistic, but also it reveals with clarity the intellectual and emotional preoccupations of Fugard, the influences that shaped his thoughts and feelings, and the circumstances that made him an articulate man of conscience and integrity, so evident in his mature work. Tsotsi then cannot be ignored. Together with No-Good Friday and Nongogo it constitutes a record of his Sophiatown experience, his response to that culture from which white South Africans in the fifties were excluded generally and in which he was profoundly immersed.

The physical setting is Sophiatown and the issue of its destruction looms large. It is seen not only as the slow crumbling of a once vibrant community, a debilitating blood-letting as people are siphoned off to locations remote from white areas, but also as an insidious threat to future generations. It is a demolition squad entering "a second and decisive stage" that toppled Ma Rhabatse's wall onto Tsotsi, spreadeagled protectively over his foundling baby, a symbol of vulnerability, dependence, innocence and love battered beneath the bricks. The death of Sophiatown ex-

tinguished more than communal life. In depriving children of a nurturing setting and cultural environment, it dealt a death blow to the young generation. Can life arise phoenix-like from the ashes?

Fugard does not pontificate, but Tsotsi's dark expression finally transformed into a beatific smile says it all. The confusion of a crumbling Sophiatown partly obscured by the dust of slum clearance is a symbol conveying more than words alone the impotence, confusion, disbelief and anger of a dispossessed people. It is an all-enveloping visual metaphor for painful and prolonged death, wrapping the action in shrouds of mortality: "a few more roofs were down and the walls, without doors and windows, gaped like skulls in the fading light."[33] Wounded, desolate, the sanctity of its life violated, the townscape reflects a helpless people, "as much the debris of that day as the rubble their homes had been reduced to after a few violent minutes of work" (Tsotsi, p. 43). The world of Sophiatown is therefore directly linked to apartheid ideology, effecting the resettlement of people from one area to another. As Joseph Lelyveld noted:

> The ripples from these dislocations quickly vanish from the memories of whites the way a pond recovers its glassy surface after a stone has been thrown, so the resentment in the depths among blacks and brown, is beyond their comprehension.[34]

The remote white world, responsible for this iniquity, is effectively castigated for its repressive black policies. Aside from the pass offices, "a collection of squat, ugly, rambling barrack-type buildings," there are pass raids that ricochet through countless lives including Tsotsi's, leaving a trail of desperation; mass arrests of those like Simon,

"swallowed up by the earth, it seemed, on the dark mornings of the boycott and whisked away before the word could be got home" (Tsotsi, p. 101); as well as profiteering gold-mines that blight black lives, a fate symbolised by crippled Morris Tshabalala, who indicts the white world: "It is for your gold that I had to dig. That is what destroyed me. You are walking on stolen legs. All of you" (Tsotsi, p. 67). The brutal system is all-enveloping in Tsotsi and linked directly by the author to its dehumanised victims. Within this mutilated realm all is not stygian darkness. As with Fugard's plays, the interplay of dark and light motifs forms an eloquent pattern of alternating damnation and salvation. The gloom is never unrelieved; there is always compassion, humanity and the prospect of redemption. Tsotsi is an evil emissary of the night finding his victim "in the final darkness beyond the last light" (Tsotsi, p. 74), sadistically affirming his own existence through pain, fear and the final darkness of death. He allows nothing "to disturb his inward darkness with the light of a thought about himself or the attempt at a memory" (Tsotsi, p. 31). As David Hogg notes, the main theme of painful rebirth is the redemption of a lost soul from darkness "towards a slender illumination."[35]

A victim of dark impulses, Tsotsi's spiritual awakening is dramatically convincing in the slow and painful progress towards Fugardian enlightenment. His encounter with Morris Tshabalala and the first glimmerings of sympathy this truncated version of a man evokes in Tsotsi is conveyed in light imagery: "... he might have thought of darkness and lighting a candle, and holding it up to find Morris Tshabalala within the halo

of its radiance" (Tsotsi, p. 81). It is light that falls on the baby, on Boston, on Gumboot Dhlamini, on all those who prompt in Tsotsi a profoundly disturbing self-examination. It is a light that reveals other men sharing a world which he formerly claimed as his, denying commonality of interest and the bond of interdependent humanity; his self-involvement and egotism precluding comprehension of others:

> When he moved up to the glass his image disappeared. He could only see it standing well back, and at that distance and dimness he recognized nothing except the shape of a man (Tsotsi, p. 81).

For Tsotsi, light is associated with memory but there is nothing Wordsworthian in memories recollected in trauma not tranquillity. As M. J. Daymond observed in a review of the novel, "the regeneration in a young thug of memory, conscience and feeling, is all that makes a man human rather than a brute creature."[36]

The components of memory, voices from the past, are realised in concrete terms, a literary strength that foreshadows the dramatic and compact visual imagery of the plays. Tsotsi encounters his past in tangible forms not through the abstraction of ideas, an intrusive diegetic technique that elsewhere weakens rather than strengthens the novel's narrative flow. The confrontation with Boston, whose questions stir reflection; the baby, whose vulnerability evokes the first stirrings of responsibility; the beggar, for whom he feels sympathy; and the powerful image of the bitch giving birth to a still-born litter, fuse to pierce the seemingly unending night of his life with light, the Fugardian light of revelation that glows incandescently through his plays

until its consecration in Miss Helen's heart and home in The Road to Mecca. There is a cumulative force in these memories, a reinforcement of meaning secured through repetition in varying forms and layers of associative imagery, that change his self-absorption and modify his egotistical perspective. Groping towards enlightenment, Tsotsi seeks out Boston, a theistic existentialist, who literally infects Tsotsi with Sartrean nausea:

> The flesh was warm and living and felt like pain. It was as red as pain, too, where he had broken it open.
>
> Tsotsi straightened up again and went to the table where he put the candle down. His head was spinning. He'd held his breath during the examination and now his heart raced and his stomach was convulsing. Tsotsi sat down and waited for the dizziness and nausea to pass (Tsotsi, p. 141).

His revulsion is akin to Boston's own nausea of the stomach and the mind. The thrust from darkness to light mirrors a movement from violence to peace and morality. Tsotsi's conversion is closely interwoven with Fugard's exploration of religious values within the context of shantytown life, and, more importantly, death.

Father Ransome, a figure who closely parallels Father Higgins in No-Good Friday, both thinly-veiled portraits of Father Trevor Huddleston, the controversial priest who championed the rights and dignity of blacks during his 12 years' ministry in Sophiatown, personifies God's movement among men. Significantly, his church is that of Christ the Dreamer (Tsotsi, p. 159), a name that stresses the schism between reality and ideals. It is the onomatopoeic peal of bells: "Ding-dong-ong-ong-ong. Ding-dong-ong-ong" (Tsotsi, p. 158), calling people to believe in God, that resounds

through Sophiatown in healing cadences, as Fugardian music generally does. It is a movement towards absolution from evil, a cleansing stressed in Tsotsi's encounter with Miriam, the woman he compels to breast-feed his foundling son, for not only does she exemplify maternity at its dedicated best, thereby counterbalancing the theme of parental abandonment, but she is a washerwoman, physically removing the world's dirt in a sequence that amplifies Tsotsi's penitential desire to lead a cleaner life. Pulsing through these concerns is the ineluctable beat of time, the Fugardian memento mori that haunts his mortal men and women. In the opening scene Tsotsi twice ignores a clock that chimes dully and discordantly (Tsotsi, p. 27). But he cannot ignore the baby's shallow breathing, a time bomb of a different order: "a tick-tick-tick-tick from deep in its throat as if something there were counting off a few seconds for every breath" (Tsotsi, p. 95). The passage of time imparts an urgency, threatening as it does to impede or curtail man's ambitions.

Tsotsi's need to interact verbally with others in order to know and understand, focuses on the tools of communication, words, Fugard's obsessive theme to be found in the entire corpus of his work. Aside from Boston, Tsotsi's gang "laboured a lot in finding words and putting them together" (Tsotsi, p. 6). Tsotsi experiences difficulty with words: "his mind had taken up the words, and like dice rattled them out of sequence and shape" (Tsotsi, p. 25), alien adjuncts to a man of action. And it is the essence of manhood which Fugard highlights in his customary way, the method seen in his plays, in which he seizes a word and examines its structure, meaning,

shape and size. Referring to Morris Tshabalala, Fugard writes:

> Although he filled his life and mind with the word 'man', he doubted it and this doubt, working slow, taking its time in the years, the six of them, had bred bitterness inwardly (Tsotsi, p. 66).

As a linguistic building block , Fugard has innate respect and reverence for the ontological word, reflected here in prose techniques devised by an apprentice craftsman, to be refined later in his plays. There is alliterative prose: "swallows of beer, the belches, the bother of opening another bottle" (Tsotsi, p. 5); similes that stun with accurately observed details: "hands adrift in the small boxed world like anemones in a dead sea" (Tsotsi, p. 46); evocative descriptions that distil the essence of experience and atmosphere: "He opened the door, looked around first and then stepped into the street, which was still deserted except for the dust of men who had passed, a child without a game and a dog with a flea" (Tsotsi, p. 43); the effective use of syllepsis: "the pavements are bustling with women fat with pride and progeny, with men thin with poverty and persistence, and youth full of tease and tit" (Tsotsi, p. 58); and the repetitive use of phrases giving a dirge-like and choral tone to the writing: "yet all it gave was water .... and all it gave was water .... and to all it only gave water" (Tsotsi, p. 97), thereby highlighting the symbolic meanings of baptism and redemption. It is the love of language, managed and manipulated, that characterised Shakespeare's word-play in early plays such as Love's Labour's Lost.

Fugard's Tsotsi is more than the study of an aggressively anti-social juvenile delinquent. As Father Huddleston points

out:

> He is the symbol of a society which does not care. He is in revolt against the frustration which, apparently, cannot be cured, cannot be relieved. He turns upon his own people and uses his knife against them because he is caught in that trap from which there is no escape--the trap which Nature seems to have set for him by giving him a black skin.[37]

Originally Fugard's idea for a story led to a full Christian experience after a meeting with a priest in an empty church, the antidote to nihilism, anarchy and hate. It was, however, the alternative ending that Gray incorporated in the novel, an ending previously referred to, in which destruction of Sophiatown envelops Tsotsi and the baby. Although Dennis Walder alleges that in this way "providence is replaced by the absurd,"[38] the absurdity is directly attributable to a system that recklessly and mercilessly curtails people's actions and lives. In life Tsotsi is a symbol of Sophiatown and in death he is its martyr.

Finally, for the student and researcher of Fugard's plays, Tsotsi presents a rich hunting ground foreshadowing as it does so much of Fugard's later work and revealing in embryo those issues so central to his life's work. The gang structure, a feature of Sophiatown life and Tsotsi's survival technique, surfaces once again in The Occupation, a television play also focusing on four gang characters, four defective components bonded together to form a socially parasitic organism. Tsotsi overlaps with No-Good Friday and the parallel between Gumboot's death and that of Tobias is striking. The language associated with them is moving in its lyrical evocation of their rural background and both men are suffused

with buoyant optimism. Both good men in the paterfamilias mould, their wives share the same name, Maxulu, and their deaths provoke spiritual torment in the white priests called to bury them, and painful moral introspection in central and peripheral characters. There are character traits shared by De Aap in Tsotsi and Blackie in Nongogo, and, naturally enough within any study of shantytown life, vivid descriptions of shebeen life and personalities in both works. Fugard's lengthy exposition on the oddities, freakishness and abnormalities of the cripple, Morris Tshabalala, is strongly echoed in Hello and Goodbye and Master Harold, both plays that externalise an inner revulsion for Fugard's own crippled father. Deformed manhood, a physical truncation and at the same time a psychological mutilation, was to occupy his creative mind for years to come. The trauma of arrest, a focal point that directly generates evil social consequences in Tsotsi, re-emerges with agonizingly disruptive effects in Statements After An Arrest Under The Immorality Act. In both works Fugard sensitively probes the chaos and terror of arrest:

> ... broken sleep, or terror, or empty blankets or the despairing prospect of a tomorrow that means your turn to search for that person, that precious person who has been taken away and might never be seen again (Tsotsi, p. 114).

Fugard's preoccupation with names, so central to A Lesson From Aloes, has a source here, where a name change clearly demonstrates Tsotsi's conversion to a higher morality. The games in The Blood Knot which nostalgically evoke and recapture a former innocence are anticipated in Tsotsi, where they have a decisive role in reinforcing Tsotsi's identity through

memory. In delineating the old gardener, Isaiah, Fugard paves the way for Daan in Marigolds in August, in many ways a complementary character.

Tsotsi offers today's reader insights into human degradation, suffering and yearning, as well as the journey of the soul towards illumination and understanding. Fugard focuses on a narrow segment of life, attempting to interpret the black man's bitterness and poverty through psychological growth, both spiritual and mental. He thereby decodes for us strange sights and sounds, giving them a human face and, more importantly, a human name. In so doing he inadvertently chronicles, as he does so vividly in No-Good Friday and Nongogo, the milieu of Sophiatown and its song of sadness and joy described by Bloke Modisane, who wrote: "Something in me died, a piece of me died, with the dying of Sophiatown."[39] Modisane's book, the testimony of a mind sifting as Tsotsi does through the "sewer of remembrances,"[40] is a factual personal history that forms a well-documented and supplementary background to Fugard's Tsotsi. Compared to Modisane, who was personally involved in the dynamics of being black in South Africa, Fugard, as a white South African writer, was a relative spectator of the oppression, cruelty and injustice of black lives. He understood the foundation of fear underlying gangster rule in Sophiatown, the lingua franca of violence and he was sensitive to pain, suffering and death. In its own way Fugard's novel speaks eloquently of "deserted houses and demolished homes, of faded dreams and broken lives."[41]

And in Tsotsi's transformation, his novel articulated

hope amid the violence, desolation and desperation of a man in search of himself and God.

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3. Early Port Elizabeth Plays

At the age of three Fugard moved to Port Elizabeth and, in spite of nomadic wanderings and lengthy visits abroad, the city remains his home until the present time. His Notebooks are filled with acute observations regarding its almost featureless landscape and the people living there. He registered every nuance of climate and character with a keen eye, an acute sensibility and a precise pen. Nothing and nobody was exempt from his artistic scrutiny, neither ragged khaki boys in the streets of the city nor green trees, grey distance, walls and men viewed through a smoky haze on a windy day.[1]

Port Elizabeth is the setting for The Blood Knot, Hello and Goodbye and Boesman and Lena, plays written in the sixties. Blood Knot opened at the Rehearsal Room, Dorkay House, Johannesburg, in 1961 and went on a six-month tour of the country; the following year Fugard made notes for Hello and Goodbye and it was completed and performed in Johannesburg in 1965. In 1967 he started work on Boesman and Lena, which went on tour in 1969. It is the writer's intention to examine in this chapter the Port Elizabeth plays written in the sixties and not the later Port Elizabeth plays. A Lesson from Aloes completed in 1979 and "Master Harold"..and the boys written in 1982 have been allocated a separate chapter in the overall scheme of the thesis.

The trilogy of plays written in the sixties is unified not only by the Port Elizabeth setting but also by Fugard's ex-

ploration of family relationships: brother/brother in Blood Knot, child/parent in Hello and Goodbye, and common-law husband/wife in Boesman and Lena. All three plays are characterised by exploration of the past, with childhood memories playing a significant role in Blood Knot and Hello and Goodbye, while the past and her efforts to internalise it successfully are crucial to Lena's well-being in Boesman and Lena. There is a sense in which all the characters to greater or lesser degrees are imprisoned by the past, enslaved by it as Johnnie (Hello and Goodbye) is; or, its tyranny, acknowledged as it is by Hester.

The past constitutes a language Fugard knows well. In a Proustian sense it is a personal past: through nostalgia Morris (Blood Knot) recaptures the innocence of childhood. The past in a sociological/historical sense encapsulates the present: Johnnie is heir to the traumas of the Depression years. Whether sad or sweet, the past is a determinant of the present and future in the Fugardian world. His characters trade memories, reconstruct events and, at times, escape into the past as Johnnie does.

Referring to Port Elizabeth, Fugard wrote: "I cannot conceive of myself as separate from it."[2] It is this strong attachment to the city--its geography, people and idiom--that shaped his distinctive credo of specifics, the regionalism in which he roots his character.

The Blood Knot

All the action of Blood Knot takes place in a shack in Korsten, a black ghetto outside Port Elizabeth. Although

landmarks, sights and smells are identifiable; through Fugard's artistry they are transmuted to symbols of man's hope and despair, triumph and defeat, inspiration and degradation.

The set of Blood Knot is evocative of a poverty-stricken lifestyle--walls are a patchwork of scraps, corrugated iron, packing-case wood, flattened cardboard boxes and old hessian bags. The decor predisposes the audience to believe there is a correlation between environment and inmates, that they are life's flotsam and jetsam. Chris Wortham notes that "the visual effect is one of a monstrous collage, a collection of waste products cast off by a dehumanised industrial society, accidentally gathered and rearranged haphazardly into an arbitrary pattern out of the need to make a home."[3] As a statement on poverty and deprivation, the set is uncompromising, with two exceptions: an alarm clock and books, both elements associated with Morris' dominance of Zach, a power struggle analysed and evaluated elsewhere in the chapter. The alarm clock, a symbol of everyday reality, with its schedules, timetables and divisions of a daily routine, rings at intervals in the play, jerking the protagonists back from worlds of reverie and imagination to the present, with its problems and challenges. At times disruptive, at others salutary, it is a constant adjunct to the tidy and neat temperament of Morris. It is significant that its ring precedes any spoken dialogue, giving Morris a sense of purpose, setting in motion a series of actions that give meaning to an otherwise aimless existence. Winding and resetting the clock in the opening sequence of the play creates the image of a man regulated by time and disciplined by a timetable. The clock reflects his orderly mind and ability to impose a pattern on an otherwise blurred existence. The alarm

rings like a referee's bell, signalling the end of one round and the resumption of another in fraternal fights, as well as fragmenting the flow of experience and disciplining an otherwise turbulent flux of events. The games they play are cut off by the alarm, its strident tone of routine and normality re-establishing their taut relationship, albeit strained at times to breaking point. The alarm clock rescues Morris fortuitously from Zach's uncontrolled violence. Its use as a deus ex machina is contrived yet effective. Normality and routine are restored: "We were carried away, as they would say, by the game .... we'll be all right. I'll keep the clock winded, don't worry," Morris tells Zach.[4] Morris assumes responsibility for their routine despite lost hopes and shattered plans for their future. The alarm clock represents order, the discipline associated with Morris' narrow path and Calvinistic avoidance of pleasures, an asceticism that sours Zach's nights, formerly spent carousing. His reminiscences, evocative of the joy of those carefree nights, are cut abruptly by the alarm, a sound that subdues Zach yet galvanises Morris into action, a signal that marks the ascendance of Morris' domesticity and parsimony, his offensive to counteract through sobriety and economy the dissolution evoked by Zach's nostalgia. The clock suggests, too, the beating human heart, the physical pain of Zach's existence, as well as the metaphysical heart of Morris' world. "It's stopped. Like me," Morris tells Zach (Blood Knot, p. 86). Without prospects, his life devoid of meaning, the clock and the heart of hope stop beating.

The books on the shelf not only highlight Morris' superior intelligence and literacy but also his Calvinistic reliance on biblical precepts with which he governs his life.

The Calvinist ethic is strongly defined in Morris, whose sentiments and sensibilities are influenced by religious doctrine. Bible readings are a pivotal ritual in his life, sanctioning with divine authority ideals he attempts to realise in his life.

The contrast between the swept, tidy and organised set at the start of the play and the disarray on stage in the final scene points graphically and instantly to a suspension of order and routine, the props of Morris' lifestyle. The set demonstrates vividly the squalor of those living impecuniously on the fringes of a prosperous society. "I am protesting against the conspiracy of silence about how the next man lives and what happens to groups other than our own," Fugard stated in an interview.[5] Critics and scholars alike consistently viewed the shack as a microcosm of South African society, the divisions between light-skinned Morris and black Zach representing schisms of a divided South Africa. Anna Rutherford sees in Blood Knot "the dynamite-like situation that exists in South Africa today,"[6] while Walder maintains "it was a play to defy the ruling racialist ideology, expressed with such brutal clarity at Sharpeville."[7] Deborah D. Foster alleges that the "oppressed/oppressor polarity is presented in the play as identical to the black/white polarity."[8] Although these viewpoints are valid, they are limited in perspective. This play is too rich in human material to be labelled merely ideological or propagandist. The absence of comfort, security and justice is an indictment of South Africa but more importantly a vehicle for revealing characters struggling with each other and forging identities. Vandenbroucke's contention that the play's most important truths are not political, "The play is not a

parable,"[9] is nearer Fugard's truth, the compulsion of a story-teller to write from direct experience of brotherhood about the blood tie chaining two people together, the existential hell of another's life.

With the complexity of a palimpsest, superimposing one image on another, Fugard sketches not only archetypal images of the black man, perceived by whites as sexy, stupid and smelly; and the white liberal believing the two races can live in harmony together, but also the struggle of two flesh and blood brothers, registering the painful nature of their domestic life with characteristic acuity. Fugard is aware of "the agony and conscience of South Africa,"[10] the daily tally of injustice and brutality that forced a maturity of thinking and feeling, an awareness of basic values. For Fugard South African society embraces men and women of all colours. He lays bare their souls, revealing their strength and weakness, tensions and conflicts which are recognisable and can be responded to wherever his plays are performed. These conflicts dominate the play, see-sawing emotions and moods, Zach's satisfaction and secrecy, Morris' nervousness and fear. Morris' code of brotherhood hallows his relationship with Zach: "Brotherhood. Brother-in-arms, each other's arms. Brotherly love. Ah, it breeds, man! It's warm and feathery, like eggs in a nest," he eulogises (Blood Knot, p. 19). This creed is his raison d'etre, his responsibility derived from the biblical bond of Cain and Abel. The thread running consistently through his thoughts is the concept of brotherhood, sharing and together-ness that transforms a lonely road to a purposeful one leading to a shared future. Morris, the sensitive idealist, longs to build on a foundation of brotherhood: "Just a dead bit of

water," he comments to Zach. "They should drain it away, now that winter's coming and the birds are gone. Pull out the plug and fill up with fresh" (Blood Knot, p. 28). Morris wants to jettison his old persona with its try-for-white hypocrisy, its denial of origins and responsibilities, and start anew. His utopia, however, requires the co-operation of Zach, albeit passively. Morris' "future" is predicated on brotherhood and he strives to enmesh Zach in their dual destiny. To secure his involuntary participation he evolves a brow-beating technique, keeping Zach in a state of submission. He sketches a scenario of unemployment and penury for Zach, with their brotherhood as the messianic, redemptive element.

The painful exploration of family ties leads finally to understanding and reaffirmation: "we're tied together, Zach. It's what they call the blood knot ... the bond between brothers" (Blood Knot, p. 97). It is the existential dilemma of living with the knowledge that there is neither hope nor appeal, and the resolution of the crisis through resignation and acceptance. Self-knowledge is attained through a series of tormenting games that enable them to externalise and confront thoughts and feelings otherwise buried in their subconscious minds, and to achieve a catharsis.

Morris as tutor and stage director manipulates Zach expertly, prodding him towards self-realisation. Morris assumes the roles of educator, director and physician, desiring to diagnose the illness and to effect the cure:

> we're digging up the roots of what's the matter with you now. I know they're deep; that's why it hurts. But we must get them out. Once the roots are out, this thing will die and never grow again. I'm telling you I know. So we've got to get them out, right out (Blood Knot, pp. 60-61).

With surgical incisiveness he cuts into Zach's psyche. "It has to hurt a man to do him good ... one of those bitter pills that pull a man through to better days and being himself again," he tells Zach consolingly (Blood Knot, p. 61).

Anna Rutherford argues cogently that through the games they act "as Freudian analysts on each other, exposing their neuroses,"[11] a viewpoint corroborated by Vandenbroucke who states that through imaginary games and role-playing, Morris and Zach "reconcile themselves to their personal histories and true identities", discarding illusory dreams.[12] The games, however, achieve far more than catharsis and consequent acceptance. They reinforce the brothers' links, strengthen their common bond and restore unity. The childhood games Morris nostalgically remembers suggests the exclusivity of their brotherhood and successfully evokes in Zach a consciousness of this fraternal bond. Happily they re-enact their game, supplanting sibling rivalry with concord. Other games are played in more serious contexts and are attempts to exorcise divisive forces threatening their brotherhood. Morris' assumption of a white man's persona is a theatrical realisation of racial tensions inherent in the South African situation, the explosive macrocosm their dialogue evokes in a telling way. Morris' abuse of Zach, "Hey! Swartgat," disrupts the brotherhood bond and brings hostilities to the surface. As Fugard states: "The blood tie linking them has chained them up. They are dead or dying because of it."[13] Threatened by challenging games in which they confront each other with hostility and resentment, they sense "The guillotine must fall - cutting off something."[14] Zach becomes totally immersed in the game, confusing appearance with reality. Morris realises the am-

bivalence of his own position, a patient in therapy moving towards resolution of his colour conflict and, at the same time, overwhelmed by pity and pain. Their final "game" dangerously strains the blood knot to breaking point, a game in which Zach's hatred and resentment are resolved cathartically. He provokes Morris to interact with him once again on a psychotherapeutic level that probes painfully the underlying strata of their consciousness and at the same time widens the geography of their narrow world. In the clothes of the white man, the persona he rejects, Morris plays the dominant, patronising and abusive role. It provokes Zach, revealing his violent hatred of the system that denied him equality not only in society but also in his mother's affections. Their games effectively ravage their relationship, exposing central themes such as brotherhood, freedom from responsibility, guilt, betrayal, suffering and redemption, until Morris is a lifeless figure amid the ruins of his hopes and dreams. Zach's urge to injure and destroy is inhibited by the thought of their common bond, the unifying factor of their lives--mother, "that old woman watching us" (Blood Knot, p. 91). The game of reviling her is a serious attempt to eliminate the factor of conscience in their lives: "You old bitch! You made life unbearable," Morris hisses (Blood Knot, p. 92). Freed of her constraints, he abuses Zach savagely, in an explosive attack resulting in a cathartic release of tensions. Finally, Zach assumes a dominant and threatening aspect, prompting Morris to prayer dense with cross-referenced meanings:

> your sun was too bright and blinded my eyes, so I didn't see the notice prohibiting! And 'beware of the dog' was in Bantu, so how was I to know, Oh Lord! My sins are not that black. Furthermore, just some bread for the poor, daily, and let Your Kingdom come as quick as it can, for Yours is the power and

> the glory, but ours is the fear and the judgment of eyes behind our back for the sins of our birth and the man behind the tree in the darkness while I wait ... (Blood Knot, p. 95).

The quasi-religious structure elevates his plangent pleas to a metaphysical level. Through prayer the confused identity of Morris comes into focus. He speaks as a coloured man, with an understanding of white fears and black temptations. It is the prayer of a despairing man conscious of a life-threatening situation that providence can avert. Frequently their dialogue assumes a liturgical rhythm, a mode of speech that lifts their conflicts to a religious plane, one of spiritual insight into the human condition. The rhythms of daily speech re-appear once insights have been achieved. Religious themes pervade the play. Morris views Zach as a suffering Christ crucified by society. "Gentle Jesus, meek and mild, I'm no Judas!" he cries, effecting a canonisation of his brother and a deification of the bond of brotherhood (Blood Knot, p. 80). Religious references abound in a biblical sub-text that elucidates otherwise complex actions and imagery.

The play reveals Fugard's obsessive interest in feet, as dominant a theme here as hands are in Dimetos. Zach forever complains of the pain in his feet, frequently he is barefoot, associated with his inferior status, and there is the ceremonial bathing by Morris of Zach's feet, a ritual strongly reminiscent of verses in St. Luke:

> she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head .... this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment.
>
> Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much."[15]

When Morris asks Zach what the temperature is, he replies: "Luke-ish," a possible pun or a pointer to the biblical source.

Zach's lengthy discussion of the smell and price of foot salts recalls the New Testament verse:

> Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment.[16]

Zach's coat, too, has a religious connotation for Morris. "It prepared me for your flesh," he states (Blood Knot, p. 21), possibly an oblique reference to Joseph's coat brought to Jacob as evidence of his death, a connotation present in Fugard's improvised drama, The Coat. The garment, the outer wrapping, is the shell enclosing "dumb dreams throbbing under the raw skin" (Blood Knot, p. 21). The coat evokes a tangible image of the wearer and, conversely, creates a vibrant picture of the man desirous of closer identification with the wearer. We sense Morris' need to identify with his brother and his obsessive concern with Zach's slipshod life:

> You get right inside the man when you can wrap up in the smell of him, and imagine the sins of idle hands in empty pockets and see the sadness of snot smears on the sleeve, while having no lining and one button had a lot to say about what it's like to be him ... when it rains ... and cold winds (Blood Knot, p. 21).

Morris empathises with Zach; the coat is his starting point to be explored profoundly. Fugard inverts the scheme in the penultimate scene and Zach tries on Morris' newly acquired clothes that fail, however, to mask his black identity. Dressing-up in this way, he counterbalances the scene in which Morris snuggled into Zach's coat.

Both scenes reveal the quest for understanding, proceeding from the tangible to the intangible, from the concrete to the abstract. Zach, who understands that his colour outlaws him from a world which Morris can enter, flirts with another

reality. There is pathos in the lonely figure assailed by doubts, for whom the crass and vulgar realities of life--wine, woman and song--have been stripped away and replaced with pain and queries. The Chaplinesque figure in baggy pants, life's jester, is a haunting figure holding beauty in his hand yet doubting his right to do so. Dramatically and theatrically it is a scene of taut economy, drawing together the complex imagery of the play. Anna Rutherford points out that clothes establish identity, indicating one's place and position within a stratified society,[17] a standpoint echoed by Vandenbroucke who remarks that "Every actor knows that a costume helps create a character."[18] Fugard is interested in inner realities rather than veneers. That he focuses on the surface with prolonged attention and care is an indictment of a society in which prejudice and divisions are skin deep.

The great divide between white privilege and the black man's sweated toil is bridged by Fugard with a dramatic device employed for the same purpose elsewhere in his plays, the letter. To Zach, correspondence with Ethel Lange starts as an entertaining episode, compensating him for a dreary life, a distraction from his frustrations. Rapidly, it challenges the established order, disrupting the fragile peace. Imaginatively Zach enters a world denied him through racial classification. His pen-pal becomes the symbol of forbidden fruit beyond his reach. With the realisation that Ethel is a white woman, Morris is anguished, frantic and fearful, while Zach is amused. Their antithetical responses spark violence, hitherto an unknown and suppressed element in their brotherhood, and physical force disrupts the equilibrium of their lives. Zach's strength secures him an advantage over a brother who formerly was his

master. Zach's interest in Ethel is vicarious; he derives pleasure from the role of lascivious voyeur, the pen-pal viewing "well-developed" Ethel from a distance, a role engineered by Morris. The centre of gravity in their relationship shifts from Morris to Zach, who initiates and manipulates, with Morris on the defensive. The power structure has changed. The labourer has asserted himself and assumed a controlling position. The letter highlights new areas of conflict,

viewpoints that together weave a contrapuntal texture. Their contrasting perspectives, Zach's flesh-and-blood imperatives and Morris' aesthetic and cerebral concerns, predictably intersect in violence. "The passionate individuality"[19] of Fugard's characters--diverging temperaments, outlook, demands and needs--is clearly delineated.

Their divergent and distinct recollections build composite images such as that of their mother, the fount of their brotherhood. Separate memories construct individual backgrounds, albeit from one maternal fountainhead. It brings into focus the flesh and blood mother of Zach, an image augmented by the emotional insights of Morris; while diametrically opposed memories build a sense of separate destinies inherent in their birth and upbringing.

A network of imagery capturing complex thoughts and feelings is an important feature of the play. The dark lake reflects the dreariness of life; light, as in all Fugard's plays, is identified with spiritual illumination; and Autumn symbolises loss, a precursor to the cold and darkness of winter. Birds flying unsullied through the dusk are the metaphorical correlative of subconscious desires to escape pollution and oppression. It is in stygian darkness that one dreams

forbidden dark dreams, whereas light signifies enlightenment that counteracts alienation and sinfulness. Imagery of moths and butterflies, as in People are Living There, suggests beauty and metamorphosis, a vision that sustains Morris in an existence restricted and confined to a Korsten shack. Morris is poised between the polarities of ugliness and beauty; his is the compulsion to fly from the darkness of the black man's life to the imagined light of the white man's world. The vision of beauty and the reality of squalor are realized in terms of light and darkness, concepts with political overtones, light and white contrasting with gloom and doom.

Through imagery Fugard relates the pain of their experiences to the injustice of an apartheid regime. He does not labour the point--it is there, shaping the lives of the protagonists, bureaucratic and legislative strictures affecting those within their framework. As Chris Wortham notes, Blood Knot is not primarily a political play. The way things are in South Africa is not so much a special case as evidence that the universe is at worst hostile and at best indifferent.[20]

As in all Fugard's plays, he highlights words, keys to major themes to be developed and amplified. Morris provides Zach with a ready vocabulary: insult, injury, inhumanity, to reflect his experiences. Morris' language and his literary resources are a manipulative tool enabling him to assert his superiority, to express his philosophical yearnings and to suppress Zach. He is able to conceptualise his needs and through language and words establishes his superiority over Zach's inarticulate nature, clarifying the chaotic trials Zach endures. "It pays to have a brother who can read," Morris reminds Zach pointedly (Blood Knot, p. 55), subtly reinforcing

Zach's submission and dependence.

Although mentally inferior to Morris, Zach's physical strength and his work ethic are advantages in their contest. At the end of the play Morris is in a state of resigned hopelessness, their savings spent and their relationship ravaged. The possessions with which he planned to leave--the bible, shirt and clock--are three rejected aspects of his life: the book enshrining themes of brotherhood and Calvinist morality; clothes masking one reality to create another; and the alarm clock programming a routine now and forever disrupted. Morris' comment sums it up, "There's no future left for us now, in here" (Blood Knot, p. 84), acceptance not only of penury but also of the schisms between white and black; and the resentment between brothers.

Hello and Goodbye

Hello and Goodbye, a play in two acts which Fugard wrote between 1963 and 1965, is a two-hander reminiscent of the formula of dual inter-action successfully employed in The Blood Knot. The play has a tightly-knit structure that strengthens the presentation of character and the formulation of ideas.

Before proceeding to an analysis of the play and an examination of the text, one should comment that the title is a variant of the classical "ave atque vale," hail and farewell, embodying the concept of meeting and parting. The title therefore encapsulates the action of the play and prepares the reader or viewer for a meeting and separation. In three words there is a sense of beginning and a sense of finality. Through the title we anticipate a meeting/confrontation and a reso-

lution/separation. The title highlights the transitional nature of Hester's journey. She is passing through, it is hello and goodbye and maybe tomorrow she will be gone. There is progression, too, from "Hello and Goodbye" to "hello be damned and goodbye for good,"[21] an economy of words reflecting Hester's outlook, her quest for a separate existence and her repudiation of a background that failed to nurture and nourish her. In Hester's arrival there are seeds of departure. Her outlook on life diverges radically from that of her brother, a divergence that dictates the briefest renewal of contact between brother and sister. This perspective, too, is reflected in the phrase "Hello and Goodbye." The title combines contradictory concepts just as the play likewise brings together two personalities differing radically in thought and feeling, whose conflicting views exclude the possibility of reconciliation and a sustained relationship. The simplicity and everyday tone of this idiomatic phrase also establishes a certain ethos devoid of pretension before the play has even begun. The sense of two events, an encounter and parting, is reinforced by the two-act form. "Hello" and "Goodbye," two separate intellectual and emotional entities, allied to two personalities, and two acts constitute a tightly-knit unity of theme, character and time, and create the outer constraints within which psychological exploration and development can take place. Fugard's spelling, "hello," instead of "hullo" or "hallo" not only reflects a working class English South African pronunciation strongly influenced by Afrikaans, but also conveys a concept of torment: "hell," the abode of the wicked after death. Hester's return to Valley Road is her entry to an infernal region peopled with departed spirits.

Fugard sites his action in Port Elizabeth, his place of the lost, the lonely and forgotten. His knowledge and understanding of the shape, size and feel of Port Elizabeth, a city at the centre of his creative consciousness, is captured in descriptive and evocative language. As Lionel Abrahams notes, he is a "poet of the familiar."[22]

Place names associated with well-ordered bus routes reassuringly root the play in a settled society and locality: "Summerstrand Humewood Cadles Walmer Perridgevale Newton Park Mount Pleasant Kensington ..." (Hello, p. 176). This litany of names, reflecting a stable and undeviating order of existence, contrasts with Johnnie's disordered perceptions of a hostile environment. For Hester, names such as Noupoort, Boesmanspoort and Sandflats are more than places on a map--they are ironically stations of the cross on her Via Dolorosa, leading to 57A Valley Road, her personal Calvary of non-belief. Her tortuous journey home echoes a different yet equally traumatic route travelled by her father during the Depression years. "Heuningvlei, Boesmanspoort, Tierberg, Potterstop .... And when they reached Graaff-Reinet the Lord's purpose in all suffering was revealed," Johnnie recalls (Hello, p. 217), highlighting the schism between his father's and Hester's approaches.

Their two streams of religious/philosophical belief are not only boundaries established by Fugard but also fundamental issues in the play. As Vandenbroucke points out, "the childhood Hester rejects and Johnnie clings to is one of strict Calvinism,"[23] an uncompromising theology-cum-morality Hester found insufferable and restricting. Her adolescent permissiveness and her subsequent prostitution appear as cardinal sins when viewed from the Calvinist believer's perspective of purity and

sanctity. Conditioned and indoctrinated in her formative years, Hester cannot escape her conscience, her own sense of sin and damnation that manifests itself in her extreme sensitivity to bad smells, whether lavatorial smells associated with her degrading lifestyle in Johannesburg or the stench of sin. "I stink, Mommie. I'm dirty and I stink," she cries (Hello, p. 228). Whatever her conscious motivation, subconsciously her return home is, in a sense, a desperate bid for absolution, the sinner's desire for ritual cleansing and spiritual regeneration. Her return indicates a measure of failure in her sustained attempt to escape from the value system of her puritanical childhood. Johnnie calls her return that of "The prodigal daughter" (Hello, p. 229). It is a description applicable to Hester, whose situation closely parallels that of the prodigal son, who "wasted his substance with riotous living." The prodigal fed swine, an appropriate description of Hester's harlotry, his father put shoes on his feet, (on her return Hester discovers party shoes she wore as a child), and his brother was consumed with jealousy, an accurate depiction of Johnnie's resentment. Yet Hester, lost and lonely, succeeds in identifying missing pieces in the puzzle of her life. The final verse of the parable, "for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found" is ironically reversed in Hester's perception of the brother she finds and loses to the ghosts of the past. She deplores his withdrawal from reality and life, which he views not as surrender but resurrection. Relinquishing his identity and assuming that of his father is, in Johnnie's eyes, a rebirth of paternal values and attitudes, a metamorphosis he sanctifies with biblical solemnity: "Birth. Death. Both. Jesus did it in the Bible.

Resurrection" (Hello, p. 235).

Hester's more materialistic, acquisitive perspective contrasts with Johnnie's apocalyptic view of their life: "The earth opened up! Just like in the Bible. And the mountain fell down on top of him! I know it by heart" (Hello, p. 201). To Johnnie his father was a patriarch, whose religious precepts he sustains with his own "resurrection." It transmutes his dreary life, giving it relevance it would otherwise lack. His succinct description of their sordid childhood sketches their cramped lifestyle, the physical limitations of their house reflecting the narrowness of their thinking, a conservative Calvinist background of sin, retribution, God and the Bible. Hester's repudiation of Johnnie's Calvinist religiosity highlights her isolation within a conformist household, as well as her rejection of biblical precepts and practices.

The father/son relationship, exclusive and elitist, was strengthened by belief and faith in the justice of their ways. Their "Christian" condemnation of Hester was devoid of compassion or understanding. Theirs was an unrelenting religion that bolstered their self-righteousness. Shrewdly manipulative in his own way, Johnnie focuses on Hester's uncharitable and mercenary preoccupation with her father's death: "Wishing for him to die is the wickedest sin in the world!" Johnnie reminds her (Hello, p. 198). This is the realm of biblical morality to which he and his father adhered with rigidity and in which he feels secure. A stance predicated on moral principles ensures his superiority in the battle with Hester. In Johnnie's eyes his father assumes a prophetic stature, tinged by Old Testament imagery; he perceives him as the saint, whereas Hester is the sinner. He invokes the precepts of his father so that their

combined disapproval successfully subdues Hester's aggression. She views herself as both a culprit and a victim, provoking their displeasure and anger, and suffering their abusive condemnation. But she finds the strength to reject their facile classifications: "Sunday school is over. I'm not a kid any more," she states defiantly (Hello, p. 217).

She counteracts Johnnie's church sentiments, and biblical intonations with her street jargon, a verbal contrast that accentuates their diverging viewpoints and lives. They express antithetical views in language suggestive and characteristic of opposing forces, that of the fervent, pious believer and that of the blasphemous atheist:

> Hester. That's right. Lick his arse, crawl right up it until your feet hang out. Be Him.
> Johnnie. God forgive ....
> Hester. That's what you want, isn't it?
> Johnnie. God forgive you for what you are saying.
> Hester. THERE IS NO GOD! THERE NEVER WAS! (Hello, p. 227).

While Johnnie and his father represent orthodox Calvinism, Hester's response to life is that of the atheistic existentialist. While writing Hello and Goodbye Fugard immersed himself in Sartre's Nausea, which impressed him with its sense of loss, the finality of death,[24] and, above all, the anguish of contemporary man desperately trying to keep an appointment with Self,[25] thoughts that added a new dimension to Hester's search in the suitcases and boxes from her father's room, the accumulated baggage of the past.

"Somebody's watching all of it. But it isn't God. It's me," Hester proclaims at the end of the play (Hello, p. 234), taking full responsibility for her life, knowing that she has nothing but that which she makes of herself. Wortham views her return to a godless world as "an existentialist set-piece

spoken by someone truly in search of authentic existence."[26] Looked at in another way, Hester's return to her former home (and memories) is attributable partly to courage, partly to the buoyancy common to all Fugard's women, Lydia excepted, and partly to the Sartrean leap towards existence. It is a difficult and at times sickening experience. "It's enough to make the dog vomit," Hester states bluntly (Hello, p. 210) and references to nausea proliferate in the play. Despite the pain, she embraces life, whereas Johnny abdicates from life. In a state of transition, neither the prodigal daughter nor the prostitute, diminished yet strangely enriched by her brief return to roots, she sees with clarity the circumstances and course of her life, her chance to shape and to comprehend it. Hester, the personification of Camus's "courageous pessimism," gave Fugard an opportunity for deploying the ruthless honesty he admired in Faulkner's Wild Palms.[27] Her searing search through the painful past, her pariah status in society, alienation from her home and rejection by family cannot wither her determination to live by her own creed, the Sartrean belief in the human reality, alone and without excuses, responsible for all she does. Hester's return home is her quest for authentic selfhood, as well as her attempt to transcend the limitations of a solitary existence characterised by guilt, alienation and awareness of death. Unlike Johnnie, a fervent believer in God, Hester must find consolation elsewhere. Through her encounter with Johnnie, she gains self-knowledge that frees her from the bondage of the past. Unlike Johnnie, she thrusts forward to her future, albeit anxiously, a Sartrean "engagement"[28] with what lies ahead.

It is to Hester's credit that, despite a narrow and

stifling framework, she insists on claiming her future. Macquarrie points out that in atheistic existentialism there is a sense of cosmic alienation, as well as alienation from one's own being.[29] It is arguable whether Hester's traumatic return enables her to feel more at home in the world. What it does reveal is her ability to invent her own values. In an existential sense she exists authentically, striving to realize values that are her own in a way denied Johnnie, who accepts unquestioningly the Calvinistic standards of his society. Although Hester challenged the conventional code of morality of her home, this is as far as she goes. Unable to innovate, her consequent risk is one of moral dissolution, so vividly symbolised by prostitution. Unlike Johnnie who abandons himself to the past, Hester, having achieved a measure of reconciliation that mitigates her guilt and alienation, preserves the autonomy of her existence. Hester's denial of Christianity is nihilistic, but her response to life's possibilities, however remote, is affirmative. That she looks into the abyss and survives is her triumph. As Hester moves outwards, Johnnie moves inwards. There is an illuminating parallel between Johnnie and Dimetos: both withdraw from society; both are voyeuristic, parasitically interiorizing the experiences of others; and both regress to unbalanced mental states. Neither Johnnie nor Dimetos returns to life's mainstream. Physically isolated and spiritually alone, Johnnie finds his answer and strength not only in his father's crutches but also in communion with his departed spirit: "If only his ghost would come back and haunt me," he cries (Hello, p. 233), with intense longing for identification within a holy trinity of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, a

sanctified and deified family unit.

Johnnie is irresistibly drawn to the crutches, support for a spirit deformed by a father's dominance and crippled by Calvinism. It is the final and fatal stage of a deception he commenced when challenged by Hester's return. Creating the illusion that his father is alive, not only bolstered his confidence but also enabled him to avoid the pain of separation, the change that death would otherwise have wrought in his life. His make-believe armours him against Hester's threatening presence and the prospect of life without father. A game, it inevitably leads to his final deception, the use of his father's crutches, image and identity, the last stage in a pattern of "diminishing growths."[30]

Johnnie averts his eyes from Hester's direct gaze and his mind from the true meaning of mutual memories. He shuns an exploration of self whereas Hester confronts her anger, hate or disgust. His mistrust and fear are barriers to a mutually redemptive relationship. Whereas Hester examines her background, however repellent, Johnnie's reverence for the past and his unquestioning acceptance of traditional values stultifies his personal growth. There is only communication between them in one area of memory, recollections of the shared background that unites yet divides them. Theirs was no childhood idyll, but a period of poverty and pain that Hester attempts to jettison. Whereas Johnnie relies increasingly on the past, she scathingly characterizes it as "A lot of mistakes" (Hello, p. 210) and, inevitably, they move in different directions, Johnnie towards and Hester away from their parental source. Using past memories to purge herself, Hester restores a measure of order in her life, whereas Johnnie regresses to infantile

dependence on his father. Through memories compounded of love and hate, Hester rediscovers the maternal bond that redeemed her childhood hell, the one good memory she salvages from the past:

> Any case I also got a memory. Don't think I've forgotten some of the things that was said in here. It's my life and I'll do what I like .... Just remember Mommie didn't hate me .... (Hello, p. 185).

As she hurls her mother's dress to the floor, a dress emblematic of selfless devotion, she cries: "She was a chance in here to love something" (Hello, p. 228).

Unpacking the memory boxes, she uncovers poverty, absurdity and hopelessness. Her search for money to free her from penury and prostitution ends as a quest for compensation to redress bitterness and hatred in her heart. The boxes yield neither monetary compensation nor emotional recompense and her desperation deepens. The chaos on stage corresponds to the turmoil in her heart. Hester, a worthy descendant of Milly, is a fighter and survivor. The aggression symptomatic of a strong, assertive personality, manifests itself in bullying and a paroxysm of rage on discovering Johnnie's mendacity.

Her violence is directed less at Johnnie than at life for cheating her of absolution. Hester is consumed with the "secret, unnameable wanting and desiring"[31] and her assault on Johnnie is an index of her hunger for love. Her outburst is an explosion literally and metaphorically, the duality of meaning explicitly conveyed in imagery that highlights the correspondence of two themes. Traumatised by the dynamite in Hester's heart, a clear parallel to the destructive force that crippled their father, Johnnie moves inevitably onto crutches. As she beats him, his imagery is that of apocalyptic disaster:

"More! Explode! Swallow me up. Let the mountain fall! This is the end of the world" (Hello, p. 230).

Fugard's imagery is a well-defined thread effectively linking themes in his narrative. He uses diurnal, nocturnal and seasonal changes to signify states of mind. Johnnie is a creature of the dark, withdrawing into his father's shadow, a psychological correlative of the womb, his place of safety in a hostile world. Chaotic thoughts reflect his grief; his language and imagery are staccato, the morse code of a wrecked man battling to survive. His garbled tirades are filled with gloom, and the darkness that descends is symbolic of the hopelessness that engulfs him. Hester, too, views encroaching night as a darkness of the spirit, a sinister foreboding of loss and emptiness. "I never have doubts in daylight," she says (Hello, p. 185). The stage set is itself a visual image, establishing the socio-economic background that shaped their lives. It is a bleak set with only the rudiments of domestic life. A kitchen table and four chairs suggest an absent family. The set conveys instantly and eloquently an impression of poverty and isolation.

Narrative, imagery and philosophy link Hello and Goodbye to Fugard's other plays. As in Master Harold, there is a strong autobiographical element. It is well known that Fugard's father was a cripple. Unlike Johnnie, however, Fugard crossed the bridge. "When the time came to leave Port Elizabeth and go to the university, I had a vision of a sort of loneliness that my leaving would create for him," said Fugard.[32] Once again a controversial letter features in the play, a device employed as a bridging mechanism between two cultures in No-Good Friday and Sizwe Bansi is Dead, and between

two sexes and races in Blood Knot. A letter summons Elsa to Miss Helen's side in The Road to Mecca, a letter revealing the truth more clearly than any conversation. Is this the reason Hester tears up her letter? Does she resent Johnnie's childhood eagerness to share her experiences vicariously or is her readiness for sibling interaction and dialogue her major priority? There is a measure of ambiguity in her action.

The theme of abortion, viewed as a cardinal sin by Johnnie, and by Hester as a legitimate means of terminating unwanted pregnancies, links Hester with Lena, whose babies were stillborn, and Elsa, the feminist teacher in Mecca, who elects to have an abortion yet suffers because of it. "I put an abrupt and violent end to the first real consequence my life has ever had," Elsa mourns,[33] a view clearly endorsed by Fugard who cherished an innate reverence for birth as an affirmation and "A breakthrough of Life."[34] There are multiple similarities betweetn Johnnie and Dimetos. "My two helping hands useless and empty," Johnnie states regretfully (Hello, p. 175), a concept of considerable importance in Dimetos, where empty hands also signify loss and dislocation. Both Johnnie and Dimetos are obsessed in different ways with a hole in the ground. "Black and deep, among all the little thoughts. Suddenly there's nothing and I'm falling," Johnnie hallucinates (Hello, p. 177), his words echoed in Dimetos' peroration, an account of a man who "had fallen out of the world into a place where it was cold and dark and he was frightened."[35] Both men await and experience apocalyptic redemption, Dimetos through the acquisition of aesthetic skills and priorities, and Johnnie through an illusory resurrection. As a voyeur deriving vicarious pleasure from Hester's clandestine activities,

Johnnie is Dimetos' predecessor. Hester and Johnnie explore the bonds between them, a theme that links the play with The Blood Knot. Fugard viewed the parallel relationships and situations as dangerous, a threatening fusion of elements common to both plays. Both plays were serious with moments of comedy; both explored parent/child relationships. A fleeting reference to marigold seeds (Hello, p. 215), reinforcing the theme of life dormant and unrealized, connects the play to Marigolds in August, where adverse conditions inhibit the growth of the eponymous flower.

Walder reads into Hello and Goodbye a warning that until and unless "the Afrikaner comes off his crutches, and loses that unique sense of continuing grievance which blinds him to the suffering of others,"[36] tragedy in socio-economic terms will be inevitable. It is an interpretation comparable to that of Lionel Abrahams, who suggests an "Afrikaner volk" symbolism,[37] with Johnnie the conservative element, Hester the rebellious element and their father the Afrikaner past.

To Fugard his characters were neither allegorical nor symbolic. He concerned himself with "the reality of this brother and sister."[38] Ultimately, this is the play's strength. Theatregoers share moments in their lives rather than scenes in a play.

Boesman and Lena

Written between 1967 and 1969, Boesman and Lena completes Fugard's Port Elizabeth trilogy of family plays. Once again there is covert use of his life in his art especially the relationship between Fugard and his wife, Sheila. Fugard

identified himself with Boesman, accounting in part for the latter's deeply realized character. "The man is a bully and a chauvinist," Fugard stated, "I think my wife has been on the receiving end of a lot of that sort of greed and selfishness."[39] While crafting Boesman and Lena, Fugard noted his own "wild, maudlin, emotional stupor" induced by drink and the absence of love and honesty in his life. His family were "things of convenience," an attitude characteristic of Boesman. "How do I get out of this hell. How do you say to your heart: 'Love!'"[40] he wrote, questions central to Lena's quest for meaning and Boesman's inability to relate to Lena. The "ease" with which their conflict develops can be ascribed to Fugard's intimate knowledge of their situation that reflected emotional realities and intellectual concerns in his own life.

The play, however, is more than the study of a man and a woman locked in combat. Interpersonal conflicts are projected against a defined socio-political background. Boesman and Lena are the flotsam and jetsam of apartheid society, with squatter removal and slum clearance programmes dictated and sanctioned by the Group Areas Act, a law sharply demarcating white and black residential areas. Boesman and Lena are at the mercy of forces beyond their control. The bulldozers that terrorised Lena were agents of destruction 15 years later when squatter camps at Crossroads and KTC outside Cape Town were similarly razed. In 1984, when the South African Cape Education Department ordered school copies of the play to be destroyed, ostensibly in response to parental complaints of foul language, Fugard commented that he thought the play was withdrawn on account of its socio-political content. Referring to the destruction of sections of an established squatter camp at

Brown's Farm, Philippi, he stated: "That's exactly what Boesman and Lena is all about. It reveals the terrible reality of social injustice of bulldozing people out of the way."[41]

However relevant to contemporary South Africa, Fugard was not an artist "commissioned by his society" in the Marxist sense advocated by Ernst Fischer in The Necessity of Art, despite the self-examination the book provoked and Fugard's nagging doubts that his indictment of society was not explicit enough.[42] The socio-political content is there by Fugard's own admission, yet it was the play's metaphysical considerations that fascinated him, Boesman and Lena as "a metaphor of the human condition which revolution or legislation cannot substantially change."[43] Concerned as Fugard was, is and continues to be by injustices of his homeland, as an imaginative artist he focuses not on political statements but the struggles of humanity moving towards goals of personal freedom, integrity, fulfilment and love.

Once again the polarities of regionalism and universalism inform his characters and their environment with recognisable features and metaphysical truths respectively. Boesman and Lena are Eastern Cape coloureds as well as ciphers of poverty. As Don Maclennan points out, Swartkops mudflats are both realistic geography and terrain of the human spirit.[44] Lena's desire to re-arrange place names into a meaningful sequence reflects her need to create order from the chaos of her life. Her Proustian need to remember is part of her search for a structured life cycle, to establish not only points of arrival and departure but also a sense of identity, a pattern. The past personifies her youthful energies and hopes and nostalgically she recalls better times: "It wasn't always like this,"

she reflects sadly.[45] Stefan Zweig, the Austrian author, looked upon memory not as an element which accidentally retains or forgets, but rather as a consciously organizing and wisely exclusionary power. All that one forgets of one's life was long since predestined by an inner instinct to be forgotten. Only that which wills to preserve itself has the right to be preserved for others. "So choose and speak for me, ye memories, and at least give some reflection of my life before it sinks into the dark," he wrote in words expressive of Lena's needs.[46] As the past fails to yield satisfactory explanations of and solutions to her ontological insecurity and alienation, she focuses on the present, "the fulcrum between one mistake and another,"[47] the here and now. As Vandenbroucke points out, stasis is the ruling principle--circumstances remain unchanged, only consciousness changes.[48] The word "Here" with which the play opens is a searchlight into Lena's mind and life. Rooted in mud, an abused earth mother shrivelled into sterility, she longs to feel at home in the world. Like Hester, she seeks answers to tormenting questions: "Now. What's that? I wasn't born today. I want my life. Where's it?" she cries piteously (Boesman, p. 254). Lena finally accepts Boesman's pragmatic view: "This is the time and place. To hell with the others" (Boesman, p. 278).

Lena's existential crisis arises not just from a sense of injustice but from her demand that her life be witnessed. Her stereotypic role of an inebriated coloured taking the alcoholic line of least resistance is a response to acute loneliness. Like Hester, Lena looks for "compensation" but of a different kind. Both women are strangers in the world and long to feel at home. Hester searches her memories for redemptive love

whereas Lena needs a witness to validate her existence. The arrival of Outa, the catalyst in her life, affords her the chance to communicate denied her by a recalcitrant Boesman. In her obsessive need of a witness, she bonds with the old man, her antidote to isolation. "Watch now, Outa. You be witness for me," she states, a sentence that reflects her emotional and spiritual needs. His repetition of her name ameliorates her suffering and relieves her spiritual destitution. In Outa's presence she works through and accepts destructive experiences of the past. For a dramatist whose leading character in a previous play pronounced the death of God, there is paradoxically in Boesman a deeply felt religious subtext. The episode with Outa is suffused with religious significance. Despite the language barrier, Lena speaks the language of compassion. She and Outa are "fellow helpers to the truth,"[49] bringing each other forward on their painful journey through life. Lena's meeting with Outa is one of sacramental importance, hallowed by their "mass," their sharing of bread and water.

Stringently controlled and dominated by Boesman, she finds in her alliance with Outa the strength to revolt against indignities and subjugation. The trinity on the mudflats of Swartkops plays out an archetypal and age-old drama of domination, subjugation and salvation. Outa's life and death are revelatory, offering Lena a measure of authentic consolation, unlike the death of the father in Hello and Goodbye that swamps Johnnie with desolation, merely suggesting an illusory redemption and resurrection. Lena's movement towards Outa parallels a movement away from Boesman, a denial that represents a subtle shift in perspective, a new focus in Boesman's

loneliness and fear. Lena's preference for Outa compounds Boesman's confusion, her rejection reinforcing that of white society. Boesman's "Why! Why!!!" (Boesman, p. 278) is less a question than an exclamation and commentary on bewildering forces unleashed in his life that compel his withdrawal into silence.

The function of witness is crucial not only in Fugard's drama but also in terms of his life's work "to witness as truthfully as I could, the nameless and destitute (desperate) of this one little corner of the world."[50] In Fugard's universe, the witness affirms and vindicates human suffering and survival.

Lena's world is suffused with religious significance and references. "Mary, I want to be Mary," she tells Boesman (Boesman, p. 253), an allusion to the mother of the Christian saviour, the revered madonna, blessed and full of grace, worshipped by man; while Lena is reviled and disdained by Boesman. In humble circumstances similar to those of the Christ child's birth, Lena's baby is stillborn, a further negation of female identity and a denial of fulfilment. "Pain is a candle entjie and a donkey's face," she says in words with marked Christian overtones (Boesman, p. 265), imagery that also suggests the humiliation and suffering of a woman for whom her labour in vain was consistent with a general pattern of failure in her life. Amid stillborn hopes and flagging spirits, Lena's fundamental optimism asserts itself. As Fugard noted: "there was pain, and great suffering, but no defeat."[51] "I'm a bloody fool, Outa. Something makes me happy I start singing," Lena states (Boesman, p. 262), self-awareness that accurately focuses on her irrepressible gaiety and spontaneity. Consider-

ing her physical discomforts and spiritual adversity, Lena's affirmation of life is remarkable. In a world filled with Boesman's abuse, she yet hopes to redress the inequity of her life, to rise above Boesman's blows. Her spirited singing and dancing contrasts with desolate reality: "Somebody born, somebody buried. We danced them in, we danced them out. It helps us forget. Few drops and a guitar and it's voetsek yesterday and to hell with tomorrow," she cries (Boesman, p. 280). Song and dance are anodynes, assuaging the pain and counteracting the harshness of her condition. Vandenbroucke suggests that heightened language is the primary means Boesman and Lena have for accommodating their plight; words enabling them to transcend their experience.[52] Wortham's assertion, that Fugard's interposition of dance scenes accentuates the horror of South Africa's racial politics,[53] nullifies the personal nature of Lena's courage on her Calvary and ignores the purpose of a "sustained flow of wit and joy shining off its surface of misery and desolation."[54] The sparkle of song, dance and humour, laughter contrasted with the play's dramatic intensity, leavens the texture and infuses it with Lena's triumphant gaiety.

The games Boesman plays enable him to shape experiences with the objectivity of an artist: "It was bioscope, man! And I watched it. Beginning to end, the way it happened. I saw it. Me" (Boesman, p. 274). He perceives the entertainment value of life's raw material. As a dramatist selects events for a play, so Boesman re-enacts the scene, achieving cathartic detachment. Reducing his trauma to a comic sequence, he diminishes the hurt. Vindictively, Boesman parodies Lena's gestures and postures in his crude and comic charade of the

demolition scene earlier that day. It is more than a re-enactment of their experiences. It reveals the anatomy of his soul and his vision of life reflected in his personal vocabulary. Central concepts such as freedom and truth are neutralized by "Sies" (Boesman, p. 284), an expletive that condenses into one syllable his disgust and disillusionment. He sees the demolition of their shanty as a step towards the freedom of the dispossessed, a thesis that echoes Stefan Zweig's assertion that "the homeless man becomes free in a new sense: and only he who has lost all ties need have no arrière-pensée."[55] If Boesman is detached from roots of the past, he is still a part of the earth which nurtured him and which clings so tenaciously to Lena's toes. The very name Swartkops[56] is an apt description of those three black heads laid to rest on earth from which man was created. Boesman, in his metaphorical wasteland is Adam fallen from grace and filled with shame: "Don't look!" he cries (Boesman, p. 284), a phrase that counterbalances Lena's imperative, "Watch!" (Boesman, p. 260), revealing wounding self-hatred at the pattern of his degrading life. Lena has her own words to convey resentment and bitterness. The expletive "moer," literally "womb," is her equivalent to the obscenity of fuck. It conveys her awareness of a fruitless life, both biologically and spiritually. Boesman reinforces her desolation with words that echo her own: "Like your moer. All that came out was silence. There should have been noise. You pushed out silence. And Boesman buried it" (Boesman, p. 284). Her "moer" is emblematic of the miscarriage of hope in their lives, the limits beyond which human endurance cannot go. Walder points out: "it is at this limit that the possibility of hope, of survival, even joy, emerges"[57]

and, paradoxically, this is true. Even Boesman's pragmatism sees rebirth and renewal as realities in lives otherwise stunted by adversity: "The world was open this morning. It was big! All the roads ... new ways, new places. Yessus!" he exclaims (Boesman, p. 275), intoxicated with new possibilities and filled with the belief that they will rise purged from the ashes of existence and the white man's bonfire. As they survive society's violation of their rights as human beings, so Lena, too, survives Boesman's reign of terror. Lena's imagery captures her thoughts, feelings and situation both precisely and poetically. "Put your life on your head and walk, sister," she observes (Boesman, p. 242), a line that encapsulates her nomadic lifestyle as well as the aftermath of rebellion, a walk beyond all battles "into the ignominy of silence, the world's silence and blindness."[58] The metaphor of "rubbish" dominates a play in which Lena and Boesman are waste products of the white man's world. Fugard's highly-charged poetry and prose accords meaning and value to otherwise redundant lives, rescuing human flowers from the world's dungheap.[59]

In his relationship with Lena, Boesman duplicates the destruction meted out by the white baas. Violence is his acknowledgement of her reality, a brutality that neither blunts her sensitivity to the needs of others nor bludgeons her totally into mindless submission. Boesman is the oppressor, using violence to assert his dominance in their relationship. "Learn to dance, Boesman. Leave your bruises on the earth," Lena urges (Boesman, p. 282), in an effort to supplant violence with trust and love. Boesman's response is characteristically destructive and he unleashes a fury comparable to that society directed at him. His demolition of their flimsy shelter is a

malicious re-enactment of the white man's slum clearance. A sadist, who derives pleasure from the pain he inflicts and the distress he occasions, Boesman's torture of Lena is physical and psychological, the clenched fist and scathing word tools to shape her to his own ends. Violence is the reality of his world, associated with death: "That's all you'll get out of that darkness. They go there to die," Boesman tells Lena (Boesman, p. 259). At the heart of darkness is pain, "longer than a small piece of candle and then as big as darkness" (Boesman p. 265). Life and death is the opposition between light and darkness. "There's daylights left in me .... When you hit, hit those lights out," says Lena (Boesman, p. 293), a measure of resignation in her voice, acceptance of Boesman's aggression made easier by the knowledge that "somebody saw a little bit" (Boesman, p. 293), that her life was witnessed and her existence vindicated. Assertive and questing, Lena is a life force. She challenges not only Boesman but also humanity to witness her travail in her vale of tears. Boesman resists her demands, as the reader and theatregoer never can. He views her questions as "die geraas van 'n vervloekte lewe" (Boesman, p. 246), and sees her as confused. Her attempts to orientate herself and efforts to remember amuse him. He resents the resilience that enables her to laugh amid depressing circumstances, a buoyancy that reflects an independence threatening to his control of their joint destiny. His enjoyment of her discomfiture elicits in Lena the victim's hatred of the tyrannical inquisitor.

The see-saw balance of their responses is presented with clarity. Fugard delineates the primal relationship of common-law husband and wife, a family structure reflecting

the evils of a society unconcerned with the homeless and dispossessed. Lena understands the parameters of her relationship with Boesman: "He walks in front. I walk behind," she tells Outa (Boesman, p. 264), and her assessment of a temperament that fluctuates capriciously from one mean mood to another is disturbingly accurate; she is able to delve into the murky depths of her companion's psyche and to detect the warring currents in his soul. Her understanding is derived from experience, suffering, shrewdness and intuition. Beaten into submission, Lena's mind yet remains penetrating and her soul sensitive. She knows that Boesman feeds parasitically on her torment, that he delights in her anguish. Conflict is the core of their irreconcilable polarity. "When I want to cry, you want to laugh," she observes (Boesman, p. 241). Their radically different responses and reflections mesh to give a comprehensive picture, their two contrasting figures jointly constituting an indictment of society that inflicts destruction and pain on others. Their predicament is Fugard's explicit condemnation of society as well as the poetic odyssey of a man and woman journeying through life. Fugard's declared perspective is Boesman's, the tormentor, oppressor and victim of circumstances. The reversal of roles, the disintegration of Boesman under pressure is a dramatic strategy that balances their relationship. The dominance and subjugation of conflicting personalities combine in an uneasy equilibrium; Boesman's panic contrasts with Lena's newly-acquired self-assurance. Fugard reveals the complexity of Boesman's love/hate bond with Lena. Ultimately, there is Boesman's truth and Lena's truth, both reflecting an ambiguity perceived by the dramatist at the core of life. Boesman articulates his vision with simplicity,

syntactical economy and elegiac regret: "Freedom's a long walk. / But the sun was low. Our days are too short. / Too late, Boesman. Too late for it today" (Boesman, p. 276).

Fettered together, Boesman and Lena endure, their survival testimony to and "an uplifting endorsement of the indomitability of mankind."[60]

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4. The Period of Improvisation

It is one of Fugard's strengths as a writer that his constant introspection and reflective analysis led to self-knowledge, which in turn served as a point of departure for new areas of exploration and development. Fugard acknowledged that in the sixties, after Boesman and Lena, he felt frustrated and as a writer he experienced a creative block. Up to this point he used conventional methods of writing, withdrawing from society and reappearing with a text for production. His association with the Serpent Players, a Port Elizabeth group of Black amateur actors, who in 1963 requested his guidance, marked his transition from playwright to scribe, relinquishing traditional dramatic writing techniques for those that focused on the original and improvised contributions of the actors.

This collaborative period with the Serpent Players lasted eight years. Two major factors influenced Fugard at this time, the withdrawal of his passport from 1967 to 1971 and the controversy in 1968 concerning the cultural boycott of South Africa by overseas writers and artists. The former of necessity restricted Fugard to his land of birth, narrowing the focus of his ideas and efforts; while the latter provoked him to a new evaluation of his identity as playwright, his pragmatic aims and artistic ideals. For Fugard the two issues were of necessity interrelated: the withdrawal of his passport and his decision to remain in South Africa posed a personal problem of survival. "It's the fact that men can be good, that

the good must be sustained and that it's almost impossible to imagine a situation on this earth where it is harder to survive with any decency than here and now in South Africa," he wrote to Mary Benson.[1] Consequently, contrary to his pro-boycott stand five years previously, Fugard advocated lifting the cultural ban, a standpoint that upset some of his friends abroad. It was his avowed intention to sustain the good in an overall evil situation, making through theatrical means an effective contribution to a society in which significant opposition had been silenced.

Further vital influences on Fugard at this time were The Messingkauf Dialogues of Bertolt Brecht and "the ease" he advocated; and Jerzy Grotowski's Poor Theatre, which co-incidently vindicated his own deeply-felt belief that the conscious ideal was the pure theatre experience, actors on a stage before an audience. "Externals will profit the play nothing, if the actor has no soul," he wrote.[2]

The collaborative period was therefore a fruitful one for Fugard, enabling him through practical encounters with his actors to delve deeply into new realms of theatrical creation. It was a period, too, which would lead to future controversy. Fugard's joint efforts with John Kani and Winston Ntshona resulted in Sizwe Bansi is Dead (1972) and The Island (1973). Fugard has gone to great lengths to acknowledge the contributions of both actors to the plays. Kani and Ntshona have claimed, however, that their role has been minimised. "It was our township experiences and names that we took to Athol," Ntshona and Kani told the writer of this thesis. "The world assumes that Sizwe Bansi and The Island are Fugard plays rather than the collaborative efforts of three artists."[3] The extent

of Fugard's contribution is examined further in this chapter.

In a chapter focusing on Fugard's collaborative works, some might query the exclusion of Statements After An Arrest Under The Immorality Act, written in 1972, which also depended to a large extent on encounters with actors, especially Yvonne Bryceland. While Fugard remarks of Statements, "that was the play Yvonne and I wrote in South Africa,"[4] he categorically claims sole authorship. "I do regard myself as having written that play," he states, at the same time conceding that the text was dependent on methods evolved with Orestes.[5] The writer of this thesis has included Statements in a chapter on Fugard's women.

The Coat

In 1965 Fugard and the Serpent Players evolved The Coat. As with all his plays, its genesis lies in a dramatic and generative image "dominating the imagination, provoking other images,"[6] a coat sent home by a man sentenced to imprisonment on Robben Island. Fugard has commented to his wife, Sheila:

> What can I say, or write about today that could have even a hundredth part of the consequence of that coat going back. Even the greatest art communicates only second-degree experience. That coat is first-degree, it is life itself. That man's family will take it back, smell him again, remember him again, it will be worn by a son or, tonight, will keep one of the small children warm in her blanket on the floor--move into her dreams, put her father back into her life. That coat withers me and my words.[7]

The coat prompts cross-examinations, interrogations, enquiries and reflections. "Why did he send it? What is the coat? What does it mean?" Fugard asked himself and his actors.[8]

If the central image can be viewed as the embryonic play,

the group's invitation to perform in front of a white audience in Port Elizabeth nourished the project. It became in their minds a conduit through which they could channel perceptions to shatter white complacency and the conspiracy of silence. "We live inside and you live outside .... we might be able to help you," an actor tells the audience in an informal preamble.[9] The play became an exercise not only in play-making but in bridge-building, a unique achievement given the repressive and compartmentalised world of Port Elizabeth and South Africa generally at that time.

The coat itself becomes a symbol of time and poverty, as well as of man's basic requirements. Its shape, too, is constantly suggestive of the absent husband and father. As the actors discovered, it is both cause and effect. The emotional crux of the play is the prisoner's mandate to the woman who brought the coat home to New Brighton in a shopping bag: "Tell her to use it," he said. "Tell them I will come back" (The Coat, p. 9). The wife's determination to keep the coat despite innumerable and painful reasons to sell it intensifies the significance of this central image. It becomes symbolic of human endurance, strength and determination. It has a power to influence others and to effect changes; the son wears it to a job interview and a cold child nestles in its warmth. It assumes a meaning akin to that attributed by Christians to the Shroud of Turin, a cloth bearing the imprint of a man no longer in their midst. "It was my father's coat," says the son, a statement of religious simplicity and faith in its potency to effect good (The Coat, p. 19). God is in these peoples' lives, faith/is in their hearts and prayers/are on their lips. It is not only the belief of devout men and women but an elaborate

attempt to structure their lives on biblical precedents, translating pain into meaningful terms that transcend the politico/legal cruelty of their world: "Wasn't there a man in the Bible who suffered a series of calamities?" asks Haemon (The Coat, pp. 24-25); while Lavrenti replies with another question, "You think God was testing the old girl?" (The Coat, p. 25). The inference is clear, an external and eternal divinity directing the apparently mindless suffering of his people to unknown but higher ends. As in all his plays Fugard stresses the salvation that lies in human bonding, the supportive actions of a son and the loyalty of a wife.

Fugard's trademark of specifics is evident throughout the play. Sited in Port Elizabeth, we hear of Mnqandi Street in New Brighton, the Administration offices, the Rooi Hell prison, Nikwe Street, Avenue A, Pendla Road, Jolobe Road and the Newell High Street, the familiar litany of landmarks that roots Fugard's characters in a familiar landscape. At the same time another process is at work that elevates the characters to a plane representative of Everyman everywhere, an impression heightened by generic names designated in scene titles: "The Scene In Which The Wife Gets Back Her Husband's Coat" (The Coat, p. 10), "The Scene Where The Old Woman Is Alone With Her Coat" (The Coat, p. 12) and "The Scene Where The Son Borrows The Father's Coat To Look For A Job" (The Coat, p. 14). Fugard, having established the local colour of the actors' environment, widens the scope and relevance of the content. There is a line demarcating the actors and the characters they portray, a division between those with names and those nameless ones symbolic of the human condition. It is the nameless who wait patiently for their menfolk, whose destitute families

sleep on the floor, whose sons leave school to eke out a subsistence living. They are the ones whose names we do not know not only because they are every man, woman and child but also through the dehumanising strictures of an apartheid society. "I asked my husband their names. He said that he didn't know. They were in another cell. In court they were called number one accused and number two accused" (The Coat, p. 9), Marie tells her fellow actors. The absence of names is significant in Fugard's world where nomenclature is so often identified with rights, possession and existence itself. The play's condensed content conveys effectively the lot of the black man in South Africa, the heartless impersonality of political trials, the strains imposed on prisoners, the bitterness of their families, the values accorded to education, and the harsh realities and insecurities of township life.

Fugard's actors, the Serpent Players, ask innumerable questions. Uncertain, they have a need to explore, to know and to understand. "Everytime I thought something, there was a question. Questions without answers is hell man," Aniko states (The Coat, pp. 13-14). Behind their interrogation of one another looms Fugard's moral imperative that "somebody must ask the question that can't be answered."[10]

Woven into the dialogue are hints and pointers to Fugard's later plays. "Fair doesn't come into it. We're black," Lavrenti states (The Coat, p. 20), a sentence used 17 years later in "Master Harold"..and the boys. Hally, quoting his father's racialistic joke that a nigger's arse is not fair, adds: "It's what is called a pun. You see, fair means both light in color and to be just and decent."[11] The emphasis on a garment and its potential to change lives echoes in The Blood

Knot. In rehearsing and directing his players, Fugard strove to achieve Brechtian ease and lightness, "the effortlessness of a juggler" (The Coat, p. 6), a phrase that finds a telling and final resonance in Dimetos, which ends with the image of a juggler holding out his hands, giving and receiving in one skilled movement.

Aside from providing an alternative theatre experience that contrasted starkly with the commercial theatre current at the time, Fugard used the theatre to raise the consciousness of audience and performers alike. As Gray points out it is probable that in doing so Fugard might also have learned techniques of story telling and methods of "communally evolving dramatic ritual with its own unique structures."[12]

Orestes

Improvisational methods that characterised The Coat proved fruitful in Fugard's association with the Serpent Players. Together they devised further and as yet unpublished theatrical exercises such as Friday's Bread on Monday (1970), The Last Bus (1969) and Sell-Out (date unknown). With characteristic self-scrutiny and honesty, Fugard came to realize that the techniques employed for The Coat were no longer exciting or stimulating. "Now it is stale--our efforts lack magic, lack real searching," he wrote.[13] He was moving towards a new theatrical reality, away from words to actions. In 1971, Fugard, together with Yvonne Bryceland, Val Donald and Wilson Dunster conceived Orestes, a minimal text of 400 words that Vandenbroucke terms "Imagistic."[14] Certainly the juxtaposing of disparate scenes, images, characters and locations merits

this description.

Although the play has been "scored" in three large books--the writer of this thesis has a copy of the text and a copy of the detailed stage directions through the courtesy of the National English Literary Museum and Documentation Centre in Grahamstown--Orestes has never been published. Fugard wrote a comprehensive account of this experimental play in a letter to an American friend in which he described Orestes as "my purest statement yet in visual terms, as opposed to the literary."[15] The 1971 programme note indicated mingling of two narrative streams, flowing from ancient Greek and contemporary South African sources, the story of Clytemnestra and her two children, Electra and Orestes merging with that of a young man in the Johannesburg Railway Station concourse, identifiable to South Africans as John Harris, who left a suitcase filled with dynamite and petrol there. The subsequent explosion killed a young child and severely burned an old woman. "I superimposed, almost in the sense of a palimpsest, this image on that of Clytemnestra and her two children, Orestes and Electra," Fugard wrote.[16] Aside from Fugard's debt to classical Greek literature, in the Oresteian mythology of Aeschylus and Euripides, contemporary references to a latter-day Clytemnestra, a South African murderess called "Iris," add density to the imagery.

Fugard and his cast were also influenced by R. D. Laing's Politics of Experience and The Bird of Paradise, which provided them with "compass bearings in terms of our exploration of 'inner space.'"[17] It was an influence reflected in the urgency, devastation and alienation of the work. Fugard's letter giving an account of the play provides a theatrical postscript not found in the NELM text or commentary, with final

quotations/ to be read aloud from R. D. Laing's The Divided Self and The Bird of Paradise. The young woman's quotation from The Divided Self highlights not only human relationships, primarily that of mother/child, but also the pain and alienation of the human condition. The older woman's reading from The Bird of Paradise is flagrantly sexual, a direct reference to the irresistible attraction Agamemnon has for her, her resentment of this primary drive and her desire for vengeance.

Fugard has stated that Orestes was his most extreme excursion into a new type of theatre experience, one that provided an entirely new vocabulary. Its importance cannot be over-estimated. "I can think of no aspect of my work, either as writer or director, that it has not influenced," he wrote.[18] It took courage for Fugard to turn his back on the securities and orthodoxies of the past and to formulate a new method of dramatic communication. Clearly he recognised the need for new encounters. The skeletal text, 400 words in an 80 minute presentation, shifted the focus from utterance to silence as real and positive theatrical entities. Orestes incorporated "mime" and represented a marked divergence from the chronological sequence and logic of his earlier work. / It became Fugard's "purest statement yet in visual terms."[19]

If one examines the classical material, a primary source of Fugard's play, the ingenuity of its parallel situations becomes apparent. In Euripides' Orestes, Clytemnestra stands accused not of murder alone but of infidelity to Agamemnon. Her death at the hand of Orestes is viewed by Electra, his sister, as "obedience to the god that made him slay her."[20] The deed of matricide is pre-ordained; and at the conclusion of the play Apollo, by the device of deus ex machina, restores

their fortunes. He directs Orestes to go to Athens that he may be purged of his guilt, while Electra is to be the wife of Pylades. Peace is evidently in store for everyone. Fugard's play, on the other hand, ends with the deed of "matricide," a total assault on the old woman we presume to be Clytemnestra. Orestes/John Harris, too, is avenging a murder not of his father, but of his fatherland. In killing Clytemnestra, he attempts to eliminate contemporary social and political evils. There is, however, no classical conflict between divine command and moral instinct.

In Fugard's play the attack upon Clytemnestra is revolting and there is none of the pity we inevitably feel for Euripides' victims of a relentless, profitless code of revenge. For Euripides, the brutality of the God's command is a challenge to Orestes, just as the command to sacrifice Iphigenia has been a challenge to his father. Both, being weak, prefer sin under authority to the risks of moral independence. When the deed has been done, brother and sister, who a little while earlier were trying not to know each other, find themselves alone together in a condemning world; and having discovered that each is the other's only friend, they are forced to part.[21] Fugard's play is a drastic pruning of this ancient narrative achieved by a mind steeped in the classical characters and perspectives of Euripides and Aeschylus. The play is suffused with concerns central to Fugard: one character's discovery of another, the stresses of bonding and alienation within human relationships, the interdependence of human beings, the dreams and nightmares inherent in the human condition, and the ability of words to create new realities. Through dramatic metaphor Fugard has succeeded in articulating

these archetypal experiences.

An examination of the text alone, divorced from the commentary, the letter and literary sources, yields little. It does reveal, however, a major preoccupation with language and its components, the process first apparent in the spelling of "Orestes" and more so in the birth scene when Clytemnestra uses "Iphigenia" to denote the painful labour she endures. Every syllable is an assault on the silence around her:

EE
FIDG
A
N
AH
IPHEGENIA[22]

When the syllables come together, the birth of a child and of a name are accomplished. The name becomes one component in Clytemnestra's vocabulary of grief.

Where words are finally defeated by the silence, only actions remain as explicit indicators of mood and intention. The destruction of a chair, representing Clytemnestra's frenzied murder of Agamemnon, is "an awesome and chilling spectacle,"[23] witnessed by Orestes and Electra, whose ability to relate to each other diminishes fatally. The splintered chair symbolizes their shattered dreams and their innocence corrupted by interpersonal conflicts and hostilities. A matchbox slowly pushed off a man's knee conveys the movement of an object to its limits and subsequent collapse under relentless pressure. Orestes boxed in by chairs suggests a hunted/hunter motif; the girl tapping on an empty matchbox foreshadows a ticking bomb. These intense symbolic actions (consequent upon a radical reduction of text) rely heavily on an intelligent and perceptive audience for their effectiveness.

Music is also important in the play, nursery rhymes redolent of childhood innocence, songs that echo former good times, poignantly highlighting the loss of equilibrium.

The terrain Fugard traversed with his cast spans innocence, evil, sexuality, dreams, concepts of reality, loyalty and revenge. In Orestes the actors are finally "encapsuled in their separate realities."[24] Their moves and countermoves within a confined space constitute an unarticulated sub-text of fear, loneliness and pain. Although part of Orestes is rooted in the John Harris sabotage incident, an overtly political theme, Vandenbroucke justifiably points out that Fugard's use of the Orestes myth "suggests forces that are timeless, perhaps unavoidable."[25] The interweaving of mythic and contemporary strands links Orestes with Dimetos.

Sizwe Bansi is Dead

Fugard at one time rated Sizwe Bansi is Dead fairly low, viewing it as a play which (not too successfully) walks the tightrope between propaganda and poetry. A collaborative play developed by Fugard, Kani and Ntshona, it was given its first performance on 8 October 1972 at the Space Theatre in Cape Town and was revived in January 1977 at the Royal Court Theatre. Prior to the London opening Fugard was nervous, finding it difficult to believe that a story as South African as Sizwe Bansi could have any significance outside his country.[26] However, as they worked through the play, he was deeply moved by its essential honesty and humility as well as the clever structure and style. "I am as confident of the integrity and honesty of its 'witness' now as I was then and, equivalently, am just as

sustained by it," he observed.[27] In terms of presentation it perpetuates his Orestes methodology: the use of Grotowski's "poor theatre" as opposed to "rich theatre," truth versus pretence, the holy actor in contradistinction to the courtesan actor.[28] In content it reveals links with Fugard's earlier township plays: the depiction of an innocent rural African in an urban environment with all its pitfalls, and the vivid recreation of shebeen life. In structure it follows the preferred Fugardian format, the two-hander, an intimate framework easily enlarged through role-playing, another of Fugard's tried and tested techniques.

Sizwe Bansi, however, is directly concerned with the vast web of legislation that confines the African to his tribal homeland, releasing him only in the interest of the industrial advancement of the white community. As Professor John Dugard has pointed out, when an African visits a "white area" as a migrant labourer, he does so on sufferance, shackled by legislation and bureaucracy:

> the Government has resorted to a world of make-believe in which Africans in the white areas are viewed and treated as temporary sojourners. The impermanent nature of their sojourn is repeatedly brought home to them by laws which restrict their entrance to the white areas, oblige them to account for their presence there, and threaten them with arbitrary expulsion.[29]

Sizwe Bansi is set against this background. The forces that disrupt Sizwe's life are those defined in statute books. Through Sizwe, the authors mirror the life and times of a people, delineating with insight and compassion the confusion of people shoved around like chips on a roulette table and their consequent defiance. The frightening panoply of laws is central to this play in which men pit their resources against

the bogey of influx control. We learn of Sizwe's quandary, the story of a man leaving his drought-stricken homeland to find a livelihood elsewhere. The web of stringent legal regulations enmeshing each black man and restricting his movement from one area to another is tellingly exposed with humour and pathos. The trials and tribulations of the African--passbooks, hawkers' licenses, labour bureaux and administration offices--are incorporated with dramatic skill into the narrative, which is an intelligent fusion of thematic material and character development.

Sizwe, alias Robert, Styles and Buntu are not political marionettes manipulated by didactic puppeteers but flesh and blood personalities struggling to survive under adverse socio-political conditions. Within this primary framework created by the authors, ancilliary themes are investigated: the importance of memories as a source of inspiration, the ever-present reality of death, and the quest for man's true nature. "There is nothing we can leave behind when we die, except the memory of ourselves," Styles tells Sizwe,[30] a comment referring not only to materially impoverished society but also revealing a reverence for the past that can serve to inspire and console. In the township plays violence and death were ever-present companions of Fugard's characters, and they are likewise inescapable here, a part of the everyday texture of African life. As Mary Benson points out, death is present in the title. Sizwe must "kill" his name in order to survive and, significantly, Styles' studio is next to a funeral parlour.[31] Vandenbroucke aptly notes that death is palpable in Sizwe Bansi, the characters embracing life at every opportunity, "taking risks to augment its meagre proportions."[32] Styles and

Buntu are cast in a familiar mould, irrepressible celebrants of life such as it is or might be. Allied to acceptance of gloomy or potentially threatening situations is the desire to infuse life with the radiance of a dream. "This is a strong-room of dreams," Styles tells Sizwe. "The dreamers? My people. The simple people, who you never find mentioned in the history books, who never get statues erected to them, or monuments commemorating their great deeds" (Sizwe Bansi, p. 12). Through his photographic skills, Styles creates a world of bright illusions for his clients, transforming their drab realities. He focuses on their as yet unrealized hopes and generally gives faceless humanity an identity just as Fugard, Kani and Ntshona strive to do through their play. Man's inner being is highlighted, his true identity undiminished by society's otherwise dehumanising insistence on numbers. Buntu's ingenious scheme that exploits death to confer legitimacy on the living enables Sizwe to triumph over the system. Re-shuffling identities is a valid part of the Fugardian role-playing ethos, a dramatic commentary on the schisms between appearance and reality. Ironically, actors play people, who in turn are compelled to be actors in order to survive. "Yessus, Styles, they're all playing your part today!" Styles exclaims on seeing the hypocritical fawning of his superiors (Sizwe Bansi, p. 8). Role-playing as a recurring element in Fugard's plays enables characters to open windows onto new worlds and doors onto their past. It torments, entertains, instructs and purifies. Styles' role-playing as salesman, priest and policeman equips Sizwe with essential survival skills and widens the audience's perspective, enabling them to see a world on their doorstep as yet unknown and un-

charted. Details multiply in the play's recreation of township life and personalities, a recreation that contributes to the growing rapport between actors and audience.

Sizwe Bansi is suffused with humour despite the difficulties encountered by its characters. The underlying humour enables them to sustain setbacks with relative equanimity, to laugh at themselves and their dilemmas. The sequence in which Styles wages war on the vermin infesting his studio, spinning insecticide tins like revolvers and putting them in imaginary holsters, is pure comedy routine, as is the "translation" he gives to his colleagues of Baas Bradley's instructions prior to the visit of Henry Ford at the plant in Port Elizabeth. Fugard attaches significance to a human being's capacity to laugh, which he views as a survival mechanism in South Africa.

As with all his plays, Sizwe Bansi originates with a powerful generative image, in this instance a photograph of a man with a pipe in one hand and a cigarette in the other. "Hold it, Robert. Hold it just like that. Just one more. Now smile, Robert .... Smile .... Smile ...." Styles urges his client (Sizwe Bansi, p. 44). It is the image with which the play ends, rounding off the structure, linking it with Sizwe's entry, the image successfully uniting beginning and end. Fugard's distinctive technique of rooting plot and characters in specifics is evident in Sizwe Bansi. The world of New Brighton is palpable, with recognizable landmarks and addresses such as Mapija Street, Newell High School, Mbizweni Square and Rio Cinema. It is this clearly defined background that gives the characters their reality. The backdrop is never an unconvincing set for political propagandising.

The characters have dignity natural to African men:

Styles is motivated by a need to stand on his own feet, to be a man. The wise grandfather who walks into his studio is a symbol of Life, of all it means and does to a man; and Sizwe, in accents strongly foreshadowing Errol in Statements After An Arrest Under The Immorality Act, grapples naively with a definition of manhood: "I'm a man. I've got eyes to see. I've got ears to listen when people talk. I've got a head to think good things" (Sizwe Bansi,p. 35). The human dimension is paramount. Sizwe Bansi is peopled with characters encompassing childhood, youth, maturity and old age. It projects African society in an urban setting, made up of individuals moving through their personal rites of passage. The spirit of the play's protagonists triumphantly refutes the title. Sizwe Bansi, meaning the large nation, is very much alive. As Vandenbroucke notes, apartheid assaults man's dignity but cannot conquer it,[33] a thesis which is to be amplified with great eloquence and strength in The Island, the next improvised play to be examined.

The Island

The improvisations of actors in a rehearsal room reached an apogee of Grotowskian technique in The Island, devised collaboratively in 1973 by Athol Fugard, John Kani and Winston Ntshona.

Fugard's Notebooks reveal an on-going and gnawing preoccupation with loss of freedom and imprisonment in South Africa. In 1956 he wrote a prison play, The Cell, for Circle Players; in May 1962 he attended the sabotage trial of Harold Strachan, John Jack and Govan Mbeki; in August 1965 he

travelled to Cradock for the trial of Norman Ntshinga. In December 1966 Welcome Duru, who served three years' hard labour on Robben Island, visited Fugard and described the journey from Port Elizabeth to Cape Town, as well as typical labour on the island. Most significantly, Fugard spent countless hours with Ntshinga after his release in September 1967, who regaled him with "hilarious-terrible stories about life on the Island."[34] In Ntshinga's outpouring of Robben Island stories he learned of prison guard brutality, the "chain of sympathy" among the injured prisoners, the "weather forecast and news bulletin," the "telephone" conversations with someone on the outside, the absurd tasks, improvised bioscope, the close relationships of those in the same cell, the "authorised" shows that caricatured prison officers and warders; all themes to be introduced and explored in The Island. With regard to the collaboration it is important to note that Fugard's contribution in terms of thematic material must have been considerable, in addition to his playwright's insistence on form and style dictated by "cool detachment," "distance," "elevation" and "objectivity."[35]

Off the coast of Cape Town lies Robben Island wreathed romantically and deceptively in soft mist, but bearing on its soil the frustrations, torment and yearnings of a prison community. Robben Island was Fugard's chosen canvas on which he sketched the pain and suffering of political prisoners removed from their families, homes and freedom to a restricted and psychologically destructive environment. Fugard, Kani and Ntshona mirrored events known to South African black people but rarely examined by white South Africans comfortably distant from the island both literally and metaphorically.

In 1973 Fugard created parameters of space and time within which the circumscribed lives of the prisoners would unfold. The space encompasses the island itself, the straight line from the prison to the quarry, the cell, the solitary confinement cell and locked doors. The time embraces the sentence, experienced as a living death. To these the play adds a third component, punishment, the complex of ideas and themes derived from his reading in 1963 of Camus's Sisyphus. The absurdity of the prisoners' labour, the image of "back-breaking and grotesquely futile labour," is the image with which the play opens.[36] Intense suffering strikes one dumb, leaves one speechless and lost for words. This state of being informs the opening sequence of the play. The actors and the audience suffer, the former physically, the latter vicariously, linked together in a scene that establishes immediately and with telling dramatic effect the hardships endured by prisoners on the island. Mindless repetitive movements, physical effort, brutality and fear, all silently conveyed in those chilling minutes before the first word is spoken, highlight Fugard's dependence on actors to give this experience concrete form and impact. His stage directions play a vital role within the play's overall structure and constitute here and elsewhere a commentary on the pattern of events.

Siting the play on an island immediately established conscious and subconscious associations, especially for a South African audience. The island is physically there, references to it and its prisoners crop up in media coverage of day-to-day events. Yet the fact that it is an island accentuates its isolation, a penal community worlds apart, removed alike from the mainland and mainstream of life. It is a world in

transition, where men either wait for repatriation to the homes they left behind or confront the terror of sentences stretching eternally ahead. Whichever way the die falls, all mark time in this limbo poised between heaven and hell. In concrete terms it is a restricted space, the cells effecting a further reduction, whittling away man's freedom to a few square metres. Yet Fugard, Kani and Ntshona challenge these assumptions through their imaginative efforts, enabling characters to soar beyond their confines, to conjure up through efforts of willpower and longing the fabric of their former lives, thereby escaping the spiritual privations their present confinement would otherwise dictate. But it is not an unrelieved triumph of the human spirit in the face of seemingly overwhelming odds, for threads of despair and disenchantment are woven into the texture of the play.

The play is a two-hander, intensifying the interchange between protagonists and confining the dramatic development to individuals who are always centre stage, other than for John's brief absence when summoned by prison official Prinsloo to inform him of a sentence reduction obtained by his lawyers. We never see Hodoshe, the sadistic prison guard, or Prinsloo, but the reality of their existence is dramatically effected through recollections and speculation in vivid dialogue that succeeds in bodying forth their tormentors as flesh and blood characters, along with personalities from the past and present. The broad canvas of past, present and future is viewed by the audience through John and Winston, whose anguish and joy are central concerns of the play.

Like Sizwe Bansi and The Blood Knot, The Island is a play without women and it therefore lends itself to themes of

brotherhood and manhood. As Vandenbroucke points out, the intimate personal bond between the two men is a microcosm of the broader racial one.[37] In arguing that this represents a new consciousness in Fugard's work, Vandenbroucke ignores the broad-based humanity of Buntu in Sizwe Bansi. The texture of John and Winston's initial exchange in the cell is densely woven with threads of resentment, nostalgia for a world now beyond their reach and fear of physical duress. They probe the psychology of their tormentor, who pitted his wards against each other in an unending contest, which sapped their strength and eroded their brotherhood. This they attempt to restore, to recreate the bond so dangerously close to dissolution during the rigours of the day. There is a catharsis in their declamation of mutual hatred, followed by therapeutic recognition of their brotherhood in bondage. They tend each other's wounds and embrace in a display of solidarity devoid of sexuality.

The play within the play, Antigone, serves as a focus for idealism cleverly masked in a classical context and redolent with contemporary allusions. While Winston commits the plot to memory, John reminisces about the production of Antigone he saw in St. Stephen's Hall, New Brighton, thereby achieving a fusion of past and present and once again widening the scope of the action, deepening its significance. The play combines three trends: past recollections of freedom, present constraints, and an exposition of ideas to reinforce the idealism that propelled them from freedom to imprisonment. On a superficial level it is an exercise in entertainment for the prisoners, on a secondary level it explores their political ideology and attempts to justify it in terms transparent to the participants

but sufficiently veiled for the oligarchy. State charges, pleas of guilty or not guilty, pleading in mitigation of sentence, state summary, sentence and summation are not just words in the narrative but close-to-the-bone categories into which their lives, actions and intentions are locked. Rehearsals focus not only on the play but the reflections and outbursts it provokes. Winston lacks John's perspective, scholarship and commitment. He gives vent to the degradation that pervades his days and his life. His masculinity is affronted by Antigone's long hair and breasts. He feels emasculated. There is regression from the virility of his former life to the sexless cipher of prison life. He confronts his situation with bitter self-knowledge and dismisses John's vision of an ultimate triumph over lesser beings as "day-dreaming." "I know why I'm here, and it's history, not legends. I had my chat with a magistrate in Cradock and now I'm here," he states bitterly. "Your Antigone is a child's play, man" (The Island, p. 62). The play has taken on symbolic value for John. Aside from its content, the effort of presentation, rallying cultural, mental and spiritual resources, strengthens his resistance to the established and tyrannical order. It is not only a vehicle for protest but also means to reinforce his identity, his political loyalties and his sanity. A source of conflict between the two men, the play highlights their diverging attitudes on superficial and profound levels, juxtaposing Winston's fear of ridicule and John's dismissal of his friend's responses. John's urge to propagate his views is strongly defined. He cares little for the mocking laughter of others as long as they listen in the end. The play within the play sums up their plight, defines

their condition and advances their status from traitors to defiant heroes. It condenses their quandary into a few pages of telling dialogue, presenting arguments in a succinct manner. It also posits their innate superiority, for their guards cannot discern the patent parallels between classical myth and quotidian circumstances. It serves, too, to fortify their resolves and to link their efforts with those of resistance fighters in history.

Creon's speech is ironically discomfiting for contemporary theatregoers, its parallel to affluence in contemporary South African society is transparent, made clearer still by the topical reference to problems on the border created by "despicable rats who would gnaw away at our fatness and happiness" (The Island, p. 74). Higher authority than that of corrupt, earthly rulers is envisioned by Antigone, alias Winston, who states: "You are only a man, Creon. Even as there are laws made by men, so too there are others that come from God" (The Island, p. 75). The final, explicit analogy to their position is contained in the decree of Creon spoken by John: "Take her from where she stands, straight to the Island! There wall her up in a cell for life, with enough food to acquit ourselves of the taint of her blood" (The Island, p. 77). At the end Winston no longer seeks anonymity in the protective disguise of the Antigone myth but strips off the wig and proclaims his loyalty to his God, land and home. "I go now to my living death, because I honoured those things to which honour belongs," he declaims with renewed fervour and conviction (The Island, p. 77). The Antigone sketch serves not only as incisive comment on their lives as political prisoners but cathartically enables them to resume prison routine with

faith intact and their brotherhood inviolable. Antigone is her brother's keeper and so are political offenders who act in accordance with the dictates of their conscience, viewing themselves as responsible for their fellow man and championing the cause of the underdog. The play within the play emerges as a consciousness-raising technique for the protagonists and their fellow prisoners on the Island in the same way as Fugard's play generally involves and provokes his theatregoers. The Antigone sketch achieves an effect within the microcosmic prison community comparable to that realised by the play as a whole in the macrocosmic world. For prisoners on the island and for prisoners of conscience everywhere, the theatre is a conduit for protest and potential change, influencing the hearts and minds of men. Fugard, Kani and Ntshona show it is possible to use drama to resist the system in stringent and potentially destructive circumstances. The faith of fighters for a cause cannot be eclipsed. "Nyana we Sizwe" (The Island, p. 72) is not an empty phrase but words for which men suffer imprisonment and pain.

It is here that Fugard raises significant questions in a sub-text: can ideology survive the severe test of imprisonment? Are passions that fired men to words and deeds of resistance not inevitably dampened down by prison life? And, finally, was it worth it? Winston's disenchantment, bitterness and anguish are unbearable inner torment, yet he finds reserves of strength within himself. Although his cry is one of supplication, he faces up to reality. He emerges as a man of understanding and compassion. Fugard subjects his two characters to challenges inherent in their situation but does not make value judgements. Important as John and Winston's

movement towards self-realisation, enlightenment and understanding might be, the nub of the drama is their ability to survive with a measure of dignity and to bear witness in a mutually enriching brotherhood of the spirit.

It is not an altogether joyless experience. As with all Fugard plays there is comedy, humour and irrepressible joyousness. Even on the island there are celebratory moments suffused with laughter. Humorous vignettes leaven the heavy texture, diverting the central characters and the audience. John and Winston re-enact scenes from a film and devise an imaginative telephone conversation, hilarious yet tinged with pathos. Within the realms of prison pain and political passions, however, laughter plays a subordinate role. "Nobody laughs forever! There'll come a time when they'll stop laughing, and that will be the time when our Antigone hits them with her words," states John (The Island, p. 61).

The Island bears Fugard's authentic signature. It is there in specificity that gives the characters a genuine and tangible background; once again characters use elaborate games and role-playing as survival techniques; there is the exploitation of memories to consolidate bonds and re-establish identities; and, above all, the dramatist's concern with freedom in its broadest sense, the ability of man to transcend prison walls, boundaries and limitations. Despite the stress on physical movement from Port Elizabeth to Cape Town and back again to Port Elizabeth, the true emphasis is on a triumphant spiritual odyssey, the nature of justice and the attainment of an enlightened society.

Linguistically the play is an amalgam of three cultures: that of the black man, which surfaces in moments of patriotic

nationalism; that of the Afrikaans oppressor, used to reflect hardships and rigours of prison life; and English, used to convey innermost thoughts, philosophy and aspirations towards freedom. Within the space of a few lines we hear: 1) "Nyana we Sizwe," 2) "Ons was gemoer vandag," and 3) "I was sentenced to life brother, not bloody death" (The Island, p. 48). Fugard focuses characteristically on single words, pivotal points for further discussion and illustration: "Yes. The Law. A three-lettered word," states Creon (The Island, p. 74), an exposition counterbalanced by Winston's insistence that "Even as there are laws made by men, so too there are others that come from God" (The Island, p. 75).

As a collaborative exploration of profound themes as relevant to the South African situation in the eighties as it was when first devised, The Island represents a creative achievement and a philosophical triumph. The ebb and flow of emotions and thoughts in the four scenes suggest a creed for modern man: "I shared my love, not my hate," Winston declares, despite the rigours and privations (The Island, p. 76), an optimism all the more remarkable considering the adversity within which it flourished.

References

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[3] Interview conducted by Anne Sarzin with John Kani and Winston Ntshona in Cape Town during October 1985 run of The Island at the Baxter Theatre.

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[6] Don Maclennan, "An Interview with Athol Fugard about The Coat," in The Coat (Cape Town: A. A. Balkema, 1971), p. 3.

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[8] Fugard, Notebooks, p. 136.

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[23] Fugard, "Orestes," in Theatre One, p. 90.

[24] Fugard, Orestes, NELM text.

[25] Vandenbroucke, p. 151.

[26] Fugard, "The Gift of Freedom," p. 156.

[27] Fugard, Notebooks, p. 226.

[28] Fugard, Notebooks, p. 201.

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[31] Mary Benson, "Dramatist," in Christian Science Monitor, 3 April 1974, p. 9.

[32] Vandenbroucke, p. 164.

[33] Vandenbroucke, p. 165.

[34] Fugard, Notebooks, p. 151.

[35] Fugard, Notebooks, p. 209.

[36] Athol Fugard, "The Island," in Statements (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974, reprint 1980), p. 47. All further references to this work appear in the text.

[37] Vandenbroucke, p. 176.

5. The Later Port Elizabeth Plays

While writing the earlier Port Elizabeth plays--The Blood Knot (1962), Hello and Goodbye (1965) and Boesman and Lena (1969)--Fugard's Notebooks reveal that the seeds of his later Port Elizabeth plays were sown at almost the same time: in February 1961 there are the first notes about Piet which eventuated in A Lesson from Aloes in 1978; and the following month, March 1961, he recorded his impressions of Sam, a central character in "Master Harold"..and the boys, written in 1981 and premièred in March 1982 at the Yale Repertory Theatre in New Haven. Chris Wortham points out that Fugard has experienced Port Elizabeth with his whole being, achieving "vivid presentations so rich in vitality and distinctive local colour" "through the refracted light of human consciousness."[1]

In linking Aloes and Master Harold in one chapter with the title The Later Port Elizabeth Plays, one may query legitimately why Fugard returned to this city after so many excursions into radically different territory geographically and dramatically. The answer is a simple one--spiritually and emotionally he never left Port Elizabeth and Port Elizabeth never left him alone. Its images remained with him through years, they fermented, indeed rankled in his subconscious until, like a literary exorcist, he released his poltergeists, removing constraints and communicating freely and fully with his memories however disturbing, laying them to rest on hitherto blank pages. This was a creative and exculpative process Gladys in Aloes

was incapable of when confronted with blank pages in her diary.

Aloes had an extended gestation period in which observations recorded 16 years previously could be re-evaluated from a mature perspective and with the years given dramatic form by a playwright who had gained in narrative technique, construction skills and overall craftsmanship. Port Elizabeth was not merely a scenic background, a convenient locale but a generative source for material, social issues and personal conflicts that informed his work with his trademark, the authenticity of regional specifics, plots and characters that ring true, whose speech patterns, words, thoughts and deeds reflect accurately a particular ethos. For the writer of this thesis, the literary and artistic merits of Fugard's plays are of primary importance, yet one cannot lose sight of another overriding consideration, that future social historians will find / there a rich panorama of events, prejudices, stresses and anxieties, as well as / the hopes and dreams of characters inhabiting Fugard's world. In his gallery are definitive portraits of contemporary Port Elizabeth, men and women from the lower echelon of society, / their private lives swept along in broader currents that flowed relentlessly through this Eastern Cape city. Port Elizabeth then is a mother city for Fugard, a fecund medium giving life to a special family to be chronicled in his plays; the place of origin for his people, giving them unique features and intonations; a mould casting their thoughts and lives, influencing growth and shaping developments. The return in 1978 (Aloes) and in 1982 (Master Harold) to "the familiar setting, textures and accent of his home environment - to the 'specifics' of Port Elizabeth,"[2] is, as Walder

points out, a compensation "for the vagueness and obscurity of Dimetos".[2a] In Master Harold, an autobiographical play, Fugard returns to Port Elizabeth as one returns to a baptismal font. It is the crucible of childhood and adolescence, the setting for a rite of passage, from boyhood to intimations of manhood. For Fugard as playwright, entering a new and deeply personal phase of writing, the first step in an openly confessional direction, the exploration and analysis of roots can only be located in his boyhood town. Autobiography for the boy becomes mythology for the playwright and in the process Port Elizabeth, revisited and revitalised, assumes a solidity, presence and significance, evocatively captured and communicated throughout the play, not only in telling references to New Brighton location, the black man's ghetto, St. George's Park Tearoom where the action takes place, Donkin Hill where Hally and Sam fly their kite, or the Jubilee Boarding House formerly run by Hally's mother, but as a microcosmic milieu accurately reflecting South African society as a whole.

A Lesson from Aloes

It would be easy to categorise Aloes as a political play. Overt political references form the fabric of the play: banning orders, political prisoners, and special branch raids specifically; and black/white, English/Afrikaner axes generally. These concerns challenge the play's characters as well as theatregoers. These themes give the play its contemporaneity, locate it within the context of regional and historic specifics so characteristic of Fugard's dramatic works. This is, however, the outer structure, skil fully wrought and containing

the flesh and blood issues that lie at the pulsating heart of the play. It is Gladys, the weakest of the play's three characters, whose pulse we monitor; as Fugard states: "Gladys is God's victim,"[3] whereas Steve and Piet are victims of a system, a man-made social and political order. The intruders into her world are security branch men and their confiscation of her diaries constitutes a "rape" of an inner and intimate realm, the destruction of a fragile personality, whose delicacy cannot withstand the brutal aggression directed against her. She is too vulnerable to survive the buffeting and, unlike the aloes that flourish despite adversity, she cannot endure. Viewed from this perspective, her withdrawal to a mental institution is almost pre-ordained. Whereas Steve leaves South Africa for England to start a new life, a thrust forward to an unknown region, England, a positive beginning; Gladys ironically retreats to "New England," a mental hospital in Grahamstown, a negative abdication of life. Three people exposed in varying degrees to the same provocations, the same setbacks, react in totally different ways, responses conditioned by their temperaments, commitments, environmental factors and resources. Steve, whose imprisonment and interrogation results in a profound reshuffling of priorities, the private versus the public good, betrays his political affiliations and finally salvages his identity as a family man from the persona shattered by incarceration. Gladys has no children to prompt in her a comparable response. Her womb was barren but not her mind, which found mystic and poetic fulfilment in her diaries. That the flowering and fruition of a delicate mind miscarries, that society's abortive agents negate her creative role, propels Gladys where she least wants to be, centre-stage.

Around her the aloes bloom, not only blatant symbols of survival for the human spirit amid adversity and the drought occasioned by inhumanity, but also in their erect totemic glory a visual, phallic reproach to a childless and ultimately sexless couple. Aloes are undeniably emblems of sexuality. "They're turgid with violence, like everything else in this country. And they're trying to pass it on to me," Gladys cries.[4] It is the sexuality not of lust and passion but of violence and Gladys feels directly threatened. Violence, rape and invasion of privacy, central themes of this play, find symbolic expression in the removal of Gladys' diaries by the security police. When the play was first produced in South Africa, Fugard castigated the reviewers who failed to identify rape as the major issue of the play.[5] It was certainly a glaring omission given the compelling sex images.

Yet it was understandable that Fugard's growing reputation at home and abroad as a political dramatist, with Blood Knot, Boesman and Lena, Statements After An Arrest Under The Immorality Act, Sizwe Bansi is Dead and The Island forcefully projecting the schisms, hardships and restraints muzzling and crippling the man of colour, might misdirect critical response to those areas. Fugard's plays consistently affected audiences with their cri-de-coeur from the world of the disadvantaged. Whether or not he disclaimed the role of propagandist, he was perceived as a white liberal writer whose works focused on socio-political issues. With time and the writer's own categoric assertions, the human drama emerges with great clarity, assuming pre-eminent importance against a backdrop of suppression. The specifics of Fugard's content and technique, his regional "haecitas," rendering the local essence of his

world, obscured for most his probing and profound revelation of character across the colour spectrum. Gladys exclaims:

> I accept, Steven, that I am just a white face on the outskirts of your terrible life, but I'm in the middle of mine and yours is just a brown face on the outskirts of that. Do you understand what I'm saying? I've got my own story. I don't need yours. I've discovered hell for myself. It might be hard for you to accept, Steven, but you are not the only one who has been hurt. Politics and black skins don't make the only victims in this country (Aloes, p. 74).

It is a categoric assertion of Fugard's primary concern, mankind, flawed and suffering; relegating politics and colour categories to a secondary and infinitely lesser plane. Can we presume that Gladys speaks here for Fugard the playwright? The writer of this thesis believes Gladys is his mouthpiece in voicing considerations that impinge so intimately on his dramatist's creed. It is a revelation of Fugard's humanity and a mild reproof to those overly concerned with ideological considerations, grand designs that tend to obscure the destiny of the individual. Through Gladys, Fugard articulates the view of an English-speaking South African.

It is Piet, the Afrikaner father figure, compassionately caring on two levels, the political and the personal, and failing on both, who remains the dominant force, the pater familias. Disillusioned he may be, we are never quite sure to what degree he has abandoned hope of salvation; isolated and brooding, he yet endures as do the aloes that are his obsessive interest and symbol. There is a close identity between these hardy survivors of the veld and this scion of farming stock. Piet's fixation, his intense desire to identify unknown species is far more than an academic passion--it is his quest for roots, the monomania of the white tribe of Africa. What

archaeology is to the Israelis, validating their claim to an ancient land, horticulture is to Piet: "Welcome to the most noble order of Eastern Cape aloes. An impressive array of names, isn't it? And knowing them is important. It makes me feel that little bit more at home in my world," he confides to Gladys (Aloes, p. 4). It is Robert Ardrey's territorial imperative allied to Fugard's mystical nomenclature philosophy, so closely linked, albeit unwittingly, to the Judaic concept of names generating lives of their own. When close to death or threatened by disaster, conferring a new name on an individual is comparable to a rebirth and the resurgence of hope, a view substantiated by Chris Wortham, who sees in Piet's desire to name a new variety of aloe after his wife hope that he will confer on her the capacity to survive, a hope dashed at the end of the play when she returns to the mental hospital and he is left alone.[6] There is a little of this in Piet's ritualistic christening of his plants, relics of the great yet blighted veld brought to life again in his backyard. He is nurturing not only what he suspects to be his identity, but what he knows is his true heritage. Piet has dislocated himself from his natural environment. There is little happiness for him at Xanadu, where his big Afrikaner psyche is as much constrained within suburbia as his aloes in their jam tins. Piet states with empathetic feeling:

> If plants have feelings, this is as bad as keeping animals in cages. It's the roots that upset me. Even with all my care and attention they are still going to crawl around inside this little tin and tie themselves into knots looking for the space creation intended for them (Aloes, p. 8).

That space for the aloes and Piet is the veld, the natural habitat for South Africa's indigenous species, whether aloe or

Afrikaner. Yet that vision is blighted just as Piet's farming career was devastated by the drought--there is little chance of reclaiming what is lost. Displaced in his euphemistically named Xanadu (happiness), Piet can but survive, bearing witness as do all Fugard's articulate seekers after truth, testifying to the realities of life, savouring sounds and naming entities. "There is no rest for me until I've identified this," Piet confides (Aloes, p. 13). Not only does he thirst for rains that never come but he hungers for knowledge. He and Gladys wait endlessly not only for their guests, who fail to arrive on time, but for enlightenment, for the meaning that painfully evades them.

If Piet can but categorise and classify life's phenomena as he does the aloes, he believes there will be security, safety and belonging, a return from alienation to an identifiable realm. Both have a need to know, hers a little more acute than his. Their rejection by the comrades and their relative isolation have fostered introspection of this kind. They are thrown back on inner and limited resources, as well as on each other and their strained relationship. Theirs is a flawed universe tortured by spiritual drought, rape, betrayal, exile and isolation; crippling growth and perverting their world-view. Is it possible amid this welter of wounds to survive? For Gladys Fugard's answer is survival without sanity, a high price to pay. For Steve, exercising the option of self-imposed exile, there is a new life, unknown and unquantified, to which he transplants his family. Piet is left to inherit the arid earth, to stoically cherish his aloes, artefacts and reminders of his past roots, to define his identity, environment and role in society; and to wait,

perhaps endlessly, the resolution of those conflicts that rend his world.

It is an area to which Fugard returns in his other Port Elizabeth play, Master Harold when Hally, ideologically a composite of Gladys and Piet, uniting English and Afrikaner traits, relates with noted success and even more notable defeat to a black man, beginning in human terms where Aloes ends. Whether viewed at the end, literally alone, or at the beginning where he interacts superficially with Gladys, Piet is consistently a solitary figure, almost akin to Sartre's Men Without Shadows. Certainly he is, as the first title of the play denoted, A Man Without Scenery, reduced to the absurdity of himself, the existential dilemma of finding a dialogue with self, yet more sure of himself and inwardly secure than Gladys, who is wracked by ontological vulnerability, her pain akin to that captured in a few lines by M. W. Serote: "Dark leaves don't last, their brief lives dry out / And with a broken heart they dive down gently headed / for the earth not even bleeding."[7] Diminished and devastated Piet nonetheless survives. He possesses the psychic resources to withstand a spiritual drought. It is Fugard's tribute to his own maternal Afrikaner ancestry as evidenced in the play's dedication: "In celebration of Elizabeth Magdalena Potgieter."

Perhaps Piet's capacity to dream, a quality highlighted by his love of poetry, is inextricably linked with his survival; the ability to look beyond the parched landscape and to focus on the prospect of relief and redemption. "I'm looking for a mad Afrikaner, who recites English poetry," Steve calls out light-heartedly on his arrival and there is an element of truth in that description (Aloes, p. 47). The characteristics of the

lover, dreamer and madman in combination, reminiscent of Shakespeare's lunatic, lover and poet, enable Piet to survive.[8] His intoxication with English literature and poetry, in particular, fulfils a profound need to mesh his values with the family of man. He dwells lovingly on quotations that highlight aspects of humanity with which he readily identifies. It is almost a narcissistic selective process, the thoughts of literary giants reinforcing his own, finally achieving such close parallels that in one instance substitution of his name for that of Romeo is possible. These literary verities he chooses are his own home truths. Literary quotations in Fugard's mature plays are a trademark--they suffuse the texture of The Guest, establish a spirit of academic enquiry in Master Harold and define significant issues in Statements. Yet the use of quotations in his plays is skil fully differentiated in terms of ambience and character.

For Piet, poetry is therapeutic, a necessary antidote to the trials of life. As a farmer, overwhelmed by personal failure, he turned to literature to find reasons for human suffering. "I tried to be a farmer, Steve, and the poetry starts where that ends," he tells Steve (Aloes, p. 53). It overlays raw wounds making reality easier to endure, yet he acknowledges his inability to find true answers. It is an intellectual defeat that underscores the unremitting series of failures in the life of a man who declines but never breaks. Poetry is his solace, a view of a wider world for a man attuned to far horizons and vast perspectives on the veld. And inherent in his poetry is the dream of success, encapsuled in the name "Xanadu" that dignifies the cramped suburban lower middle-class house in Kraaibos,

Port Elizabeth.

> In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
> A stately pleasure-dome decree:
> Where Alph, the sacred river, ran
> Through caverns measureless to man
> Down to a sunless sea.[9]

In these lines that preface Kubla Khan, the opiate-induced poem penned by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, the dreamer describes a green and fertile territory, surely a vision of heaven for Piet, driven by drought from his land. Literature becomes a crutch, a life support system enabling him to sustain what Serote terms "The dry white season." His little book of quotations is at hand, a source of refined sentiments with which to gild occasions that might otherwise corrode his resistance to life's onslaughts. The lilt of poetic rhythms and the beauty of literary imagery, the whole realm of discerning minds and sensitive souls, contrasts with the vicious and dark undercurrents of failure, betrayal, doubt and madness that surge relentlessly beneath the civilized surface.

The poetry succeeds to a limited degree in creating a spirit of camaraderie between Piet and Steve, recalling lighter moments of shared companionship, a diversion from the issues that weigh down this final confrontation and reckoning. Their joint recital of Longfellow's The Slave's Dream is clearly a ritual of their past association, extolling liberty and triumphant dreams, their shared ideals; the final verse fusing together the bondage of Steve to Afrikaner supremacy, and the torments of drought both of earth and soul they endure: "He did not feel the driver's whip, / Nor the burning heat of day" (Aloes, p. 50). Longfellow's poem represents the joint aspirations, only partially realized, of Steve and Piet. Steve, in leaving South Africa, recognizes the futility of his

personal sacrifice as well as his rejection by the comrades as a consequence of his "confession." In leaving, he discards "A worn-out fetter," the lifeless body of his past struggles and hopes. The quotations Piet focuses on, by their celebration of the very issues so undermined and shattered by events in his life, ironically highlight the disparity between the illusions he clings to and the ugly realities. "What is the odds so long as the fire of soul is kindled at the taper of conviviality, and the wing of friendship never moults a feather" (Aloes, p. 32), is ill applied to his friendship with Steve, a relationship riddled with doubt, disappointment and disillusionment, a fraternity that can no longer soar in idealistic filght. It is the comforting and illusory sentiments on which Piet dwells, rejecting those that pinpoint the pain of reality, such as: "Thy friendship oft has made my heart to ache. Do be my enemy for friendship's sake" (Aloes, p. 32). It is the gentle dreamer papering over the cracks, the idealist using literary mood pieces to set the scene, obscuring harsh reality with the light of literary luminaries, and mistakenly believing it can likewise restore peace and re-establish emotional balance for others similarly threatened.

Yet Piet knows that this glow is the tinsel of a masquerade, that word-play cannot re-illumine human experience in areas of suffocating darkness. To Steve and Gladys, in literal and figurative darkness, he says:

> Put out the light, and then put out the light. / If I quench thee thou flaming minister / I can thy former light restore/should I repent me. / But once put out thy light ..." (sic) (Aloes, p. 59).

The quotation from Othello,[10] evoking Othello's agonising doubt and fearful belief in Desdemona's infidelity, is significant

within the context of Steve's suspicion that Piet betrayed him; Piet's distress at Gladys' catalytic and treasonable role in provoking Steve's destructive response, a revelation that finally shatters the remaining fragments of friendship; and the audience's niggling distrust of Piet, uncertain whether he is guilty of betrayal. Not included in the text and unspoken by Piet yet lurking by association in the mind of Fugard and in the collective unconscious of his audience is the line that prefaces this quotation of Othello: "Yet she must die, else she'll betray more men."[11] Piet's relationship with Gladys, previously marred, is now irreparably flawed, the light cannot be restored nor its love revived. It foreshadows with finality her withdrawal to a mental home. The resonance of this quotation is profoundly strengthened when one reflects that Fugard used it to different ends and within a context of great complexity in The Guest, when Marais, hallucinating from an overdose of morphine, cries "Poor Othello. Doubt, darkness, and death."[12] Used in crucial thematic sequences in two separate plays, Fugard was obviously preoccupied with the multiple metaphorical sonorities of Shakespeare's lines, especially their relevance to the land of his birth, South Africa. For Othello, as a black man, found light in Desdemona's white skin, "smooth as monumental alabaster;"[13] the black/white interplay so central to the contemporary racial conflict in the Republic. Can black trust white; can white love black; can tragedy be averted or is bloodshed foreordained; can the Iagos of this world, the manipulative informers, be negated; will suspicion and perjury always bedevil inter-racial and inter-personal relationships? Shakespeare and Fugard's voices unite across the chasm of

centuries in asking these questions so central to Othello and A Lesson from Aloes. That Fugard concerned himself as dramatist with the quest for light, the attainment of enlightenment through creative artistry, a light motif rather than a leitmotif, adds meaning to this quotation, which finds further expression in The Road to Mecca and Miss Helen's obsessive search for celestial light, the symbol for the role of the artist in society. Piet shares Miss Helen's obsessive belief in the therapeutic value of light to counteract forces of darkness. When Gladys recites a dark litany of woes, his instinctive reaction is "More light! This is a dark little room" (Aloes, p. 25). He correlates light with optimism, and darkness with brooding depression. "I'm going to put another window in that wall," he exclaims (Aloes, p. 25). But what he cannot do is put a window in Gladys' mind, the region of black despair, or re-arrange her thoughts as easily as he can the furniture in her bedroom.

Gladys experiences poetry vicariously. She is a voyeur in Piet's world, reflecting his sentiments and attempting to make them her own. The quotations she recites reflect Piet's world view, not her own, his attempt to give her an objective and goal, to discipline and order her thoughts. "There is a purpose to life, and we will be measured by the extent to which we harness ourselves to it" (Aloes, p. 22), he told Gladys after their first meeting, a quotation she took to heart and inscribed as the first entry in her diary. It was an attempt to programme her thoughts and feelings in accordance with his expectations rather than her own needs; clearly the attitude of an infatuated woman eager to please, emotionally and mentally dependent on her partner. His words mesmerised a

woman singularly devoid of purpose prior to their relationship, a woman with a poor self-image, desperately seeking his approval and diligently applying self-improvement strategies devised by Piet, yet doomed to failure. Removed from reality, she is an echo of his voice and a mirror of his life. The quotations she commits to her diary and her memory are ironically at odds with her present situation. In giving her a diary, Piet inscribed the card with Longfellow's words: "Take this sweet soul! We'll start again. / They've come and gone and all in vain / For we live on" (Aloes, p. 24), an exhortation sadly inappropriate for a woman who has seen the special branch come and go but not in vain and who has failed to live on as before or even start again.

In a play rich in moral symbolism, with lessons to be learned not only from aloes, Gladys fails miserably, not very different at the end from the "frightened little white ghost" dabbed with calamine to soothe the pain that she recalls so vividly in Act One (Aloes, p. 7). Somewhere between the uncertainties of a childhood dominated by a demanding mother and the fears of a traumatised woman lay an area in which she slavishly submitted to Piet's creed, a woman without any strong beliefs herself; enthusiastically embracing a strong man's identity and philosophy, the Victorian ivy clinging to the stalwart tower. "You were such a persuasive teacher, Peter! 'Trust, Gladys, Trust yourself. Trust Life,'" she reminisces bitterly (Aloes, p. 27), with the cynicism of the abused victim conscious at last of her vulnerability, aware that she should have disbelieved rather than believed. Her diaries, the written record of her intimate thoughts and feelings were taken from her and, significantly, never returned, just as innocence

cannot be restored, nor faith reconstituted. It is an assault that effectively destroys an ethos of trust assimilated from Piet. In a variation on the classic response of the raped victim who mistakenly believes she is in some way culpable. Gladys perceives Piet as sullied with guilt. Her symbolic rape devastates her personality, her marriage, her world and her sanity. She is irremediably wounded with little or no hope of recovery, inhabiting "A world of ghosts--windswept and unbearably lonely."[14]

Gladys is the archetypal victim, romantic and responsive, an ardent convert to poetic philosophy. The pollution of her purity and the rapists' sullying of her soul is reflected in her coarse vocabulary so alien to her former refinement, vulgar expressions she exploits as shock tactics to hurt Piet, as she has been shocked (literally) and hurt. "Oh shit! Oh fucking, almighty, bloody, Jesus Christ ..." she shrieks explosively (Aloes, p. 76), railing against the torture she endured, pain that poisoned her relationship with Piet, South Africa and life generally. She leaves us, as Walder notes, in a position of "hopeless passivity and retreat."[15]

If Piet's elevated philosophy, the lessons he learns from observations of aloes, fails to salvage his personal relationship with Gladys, it is nonetheless his own life-line, enabling him through close identification with the drought-stricken yet victorious aloes to proclaim his allegiance to ideals, retaining his belief in a better South Africa for all. Drought for Piet--and Fugard--has connotations ranging through nature, politics and friendship, perceptions reinforced through Piet's relationship with Steve, in which Steve assumes the role of tutor and Piet that of disciple, an inversion of his

dominant teaching identity within marriage. His immersion in Steve's world of protest and dissidence "was like rain after a long drought" (Aloes, p. 34). In the realm of political activism Piet quenches an emotional thirst and fulfils his need to connect with comrades, to integrate into a social order bringing relief to a parched soul. The drought that destroyed his farm withered his feelings. His ideological commitment to Steve's cause is a psychological rebirth of a personality reduced to passivity. His perception of the difference between natural disasters and man-made evils revitalizes his combatant spirit, and his close friendship with Steve results in a brotherly bond ultimately flawed by mistrust, Fugard's compelling depiction of the Afrikaner's alleged betrayal of his coloured brother. The drought, both literal and metaphoric, is linked to failure and death, "A baby has died. Gastro-enteritis. There hadn't been a drop of clean water on Alwyn Laagte ... the farm ... for God alone knows how many months" (Aloes, p. 54), whereas the birth of a child is associated with Steve's first visit to Piet's home, the resurgence of life and hope. "To the birth of a man!" (Aloes, p. 52) was the resonant toast that rang out, embodying their faith in a New Age, a belief in a future that contrasts with Steve's later confession of inadequacy and his abdication of the activist's role: "Those boer-boys play the game rough. It's going to need men who don't care about the rules to sort them out. That was never us" (Aloes, p. 68).

In the heyday of revolutionary ardour, the birth of his son signalled an access of optimism, the birth of a generation with new strengths to fight their battles. Even the name Piet suggested at the time echoes ironically in their present

ambience of betrayed ideologies--"Gorki". Maxim Gorky, a Russian writer, sided with the Bolsheviks in the great upheaval of 1917 but he always fought for the rights of intellectuals, an aspect of his life and work that would have appealed to Piet, who clearly regarded him as a pattern and example of all that a man of letters should be, combining poetic insight with revolutionary zeal. For Piet, married yet childless, the birth of a godson was vicarious fulfilment of the paternal role, and Steve's departure from South Africa therefore represents another cruel failure, the negation of hope and the deferment indefinitely of dreams of true liberation for all peoples of South Africa. It is another episode in a personal saga of failure, not merely a further nail in the coffin of liberalism but an erosion of life's final meanings. Steve's going adds to the country's drought, the drought in the human heart. "To leave means that the hating would win--and South Africa needs to be loved now, when it is at its ugliest, more than at any other time," wrote Fugard.[16] Even though bitter and desperate, with his back to the wall, Fugard--and Piet--would stay. Political emigration not only diminishes human resources within the country, aggravating the isolation of those left behind, but also accelerates the process of self-confrontation, man alone, face to face with himself and his own absurdity, the survivor of both the physical and emotional drought. For Fugard this isolation is the moment of truth, revealing the inner dialectic of his characters. It is a moment when literary resources fail to comfort, when language and the manipulative skills of an author desert him and he is left speechless, as he is when assailed by the meaninglessness of life and death. Steve's departure has brought him once again

to the brink, where he perceives the aridity of human endeavours, frustrated hopes and doomed ambitions. "I'd rather remember this as another occasion when I didn't know what to say," are Piet's final words to Steve (Aloes, p. 77), signalling recognition of overwhelming odds. Drought and doubt have eroded his world. What is left? Aloes root, grow and bloom despite bone-dry soil and the same potential for survival exists in Piet, mentally and physically the indestructible Afrikaner whose sanity contrasts with Gladys' madness.

She withdraws from painful realities in a way he never can. Margaret Munro states that the set as an enveloping image is stronger than the didactic plants in the title,[17] a visual allegory in which the bedroom is identified with Gladys, an inner psychological area, and the backyard with Piet and Steve, the larger world of action and politics, physically separating the love relationship from friendship. From Gladys' first appearance to her last there is a retrogression, a persistent withdrawal from reality to an intimate realm and when even that private space is violated, she retreats further into the only privacy left, an irrational world of insanity where others cannot follow, precluding communication or voluntary interaction of any kind. Paranoid, trapped in fear, she is caught in the cross-fire between Afrikaner repression (the security branch, their raid, her confiscated diaries) and black South African nationalism. Fugard said in an interview:

> The possibility of an evolution without pain is irrevocably lost. I think too many people died in Soweto and Sharpeville. The karma is so dark, so locked into a terrible reciprocity. I cannot see sanity prevailing in South Africa.[18]

In the symbolic context of Aloes, Gladys pays a high price for the political turbulence that agitates her country, her home

and her mind.

Is Fugard suggesting with dark innuendo here that the neurotic English-speaking South African, ill-equipped to enter the political fray, must fade from the scene? That the black man and the Boers will contest the future in some apocalyptic conflict? And is the white liberal totally redundant and ineffective within this context? Fugard more than hints at all these issues. The white liberal is a suspect figure, sharing a collaborative guilt with the oppressor. His credentials are unconvincing and queried by the black man. That a new generation will emerge to assert its claims, with force if necessary, is clearly stated. It is, however, Piet's brooding figure, the Afrikaner, who dominates the stage. Gladys, a quiet, still figure, verges on immobility. The thrust of Steve's words and movements are away from the source of action towards a severance of affiliations and loyalties; whereas Piet remains to re-define his identity in the light of events around him. Speechless in the face of Gladys' theatrical ploy and Steve's accusation, he consistently searches for words, names that bond him to his land and his people. As he asserts to Gladys, his name is his face and story, Petrus Jacobus Bezuidenhout, just as the name Willem Gerhardus Daniels, that of Steve's father, evokes an appreciative response in Piet. "That name belongs to this world as surely as any of those aloes" (Aloes, p. 62), he tells Steve, once again caught up in his penchant for names, distinctive words that capture essence and identity. Both men, Willem Gerhardus and Petrus Jacobus, are the dispossessed of the earth. Both are victims of disasters, the former man-made and the latter that of nature, the emotional and physical drought that in combination threaten

to decimate a beautiful land and its peoples. Steve's father lost his house, savings and livelihood when his neighbourhood was declared white under the Group Areas Act. Again Fugard highlights human suffering resulting from the rigid application of apartheid, an ideology that pigeonholed people in separate areas. Fugard's use of the emblematic aloe is enhanced further by ancillary symbolism, that of the plant's range of variation within a species, contrasted with the Afrikaner's refusal to see the coloured South African as a mutation of his own genes. "Nature refusing to be shackled by the fetters of a man-made system" (Aloes, p. 65), quotes Piet in rapt admiration of a climbing aloe that symbolically and triumphantly pushes its way through darkness towards the sun. But then it is an autumn afternoon and evening, a time of wintry intimations, a time tinged with sadness akin to the dark Hesperian depression propounded in The Guest. It is a season Piet so characteristically romanticizes as he does most of the harsh and unendurable aspects of their lives, gilding the horrors in Keatsian splendour. A sense of waiting and expectation, yes; but "our gentle time" (Aloes, p. 6)--no. Chris Wortham points out perceptively that "Keats' hymn of praise to natural harmony" contrasts with the truth of their lives,[19] as there is no fruitfulness in their childless marriage and no empathetic rapport. Once again there is a schism between expectation and reality, and it is these fundamental thematic contrasts between hope and despair, loyalty and betrayal, sanity and madness that provide dramatic tension in a play where the action is essentially in the realm of the human heart and mind. Slowly yet inexorably apprehension grows in Gladys and Piet, the former plagued by anxiety and depression, the latter vainly attempting

to ward off these black humours. Piet can repetitively attempt to pacify Gladys but he cannot placate fate. Allaying her anxiety is one thing, warding off disaster another. There is a fundamental uncertainty in Gladys reflected linguistically in the structure of her dialogue, the constant questions, rhetorical or otherwise, that characterise her interaction with Piet and establish her in the minds of the viewer as a vacillating woman adrift in a sea of confusion without an anchor of faith or a compass of belief. Her lines rise repetitively in a sad and pathetic crescendo:

> "What are you talking about?"
> "And?"
> "What is the time now?"
> "It's passing very slowly, isn't it?"
> "When should we expect them?" (Aloes, pp. 4-5),

a catalogue of enquiries that culminates with "Is there something I don't know?" (Aloes, p. 21), an admission or indication that she mistrusts Piet; that she, too, is prey to suspicion; that his high-minded idealism and high-flown quotations fail to diminish her doubt about his role in Steve's arrest. Piet evades her question and his failure to communicate openly with her falsifies their relationship. Avoiding the issues that separate them finally dooms her to destruction. The grammatical structure, the constant questioning tone accurately depicts her loss of independence, direction and, above all, confidence. Gladys needs answers that Piet is no longer qualified to give and therein lies the dilemma and drama of their relationship.

In addition she has little or no past resources to draw on. With Gladys Fugard departs from the norm and, by deviation and definition, her words categorise her as mentally abnormal. Fugard's characters, with the exception of Gladys, respect and

hallow the maternal bond: evident in the sanctified recollections of Morris and Zach (Blood Knot); Hester's emotionally revitalising memories of an unsullied love (Hello and Goodbye); or Hally's filial devotion to a matriarchal force (Master Harold). There is dislike bordering on pathological hatred in the vehement alliterative force with which Gladys spits out her memories of "that stale room, with my mother sick and sulking on the other side of the wall" (Aloes, p. 23). Allied to bitterness that clearly festered in the six years it took her mother to die under her disbelieving gaze, is Gladys' own conscious death wish: "At times I find it hard to believe that she is dead and I'm the one who's alive. It's very unfair" (Aloes, p. 23). Denied the release of death, Gladys chooses oblivion of a different nature, insanity, the protective resort of a frightened and violated woman, who withdraws finally to Fort England Clinic, a name that suggests a military stronghold where Gladys finally can ward off life's evil attacks. It is a symbolic death foreshadowed in her maiden name, Adams, "a strong earthy sound" (Aloes, p. 12), as Piet observes in the opening sequence. Adams, that which belongs to Adam, the first man in Paradise, that paradise that Piet has lost; Adams, derived from the Hebrew adamah, the earth, with all its overtones of mortality: "for dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return."[20]

Viewed from Gladys' perspective, her madness is sanity and the world's sanity is madness; values are inverted and perverted, an observation made in childhood and processed in adulthood. As a little girl she watched the dogs in the street going beserk when the garbage was collected and she later confides to Piet: "Our dogs are mad. They're guarding our

dirtbins, not us" (Aloes, p. 29), an evocative metaphor for the role of the security forces in an apartheid society. To her the world outside is an aggressor, those with a mandate to protect have abrogated their role and focused instead on persecution of individuals like herself, defenceless and vulnerable. It is a realisation that Gladys, weak and spiritually naked, cannot survive. Her cultural mores and religious traditions are equally wrecked. Her willingness to perjure herself by swearing on Piet's bible that he is an informer contrasts harshly with Piet's plea "Please believe me. Where's my Bible?" (Aloes, p. 26), phrases that pulse with the passion of the believer, a man who models himself on biblical prototypes, whose obsessive identification of plant species reflects the activity of the first man on earth: "And whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof" (Aloes, p. 13).

Piet's identification of species, the pursuit of knowledge, entails expulsion from his Eden, a loss of innocence. Unlike Piet who never loses his reverence for the biblical archetypes, Gladys rejects the pervasiveness of his Calvinism in much the same way as Hester rebels against whited sepulchres and in phrases that have the same iconoclastic ring to them: "Purgatives and the Bible! It only makes it worse," she tells Piet (Aloes, p. 14). It is a rejection not only of a hypocritical ethos but also a repudiation of all that Piet holds dear. Underlying Piet's easy banter is a deep-rooted Christian belief that we are tried and tested to noble ends: "But when the desert boulder flowers / No common buds unfold" (Aloes, p. 14), a faith Gladys no longer respects and Steve no longer shares. It would appear that Piet alone, within the political

parameters of the play, must be the standard bearer of survival in an apparently sterile setting. Yet there is passivity in his bearing that bodes ill for the future. Dennis Walder states that "nothing could be worse than Piet's inactivity, left sitting contemplating his aloes. Fugard apparently cannot see this."[21] Walder alleges that Fugard becomes confused and contradictory, ending Aloes on a note of retreat, adding that most reviewers outside South Africa found the play unconvincing for this reason. Yet these views fail to take cognizance of the Fugardian philosophy that runs consistently through plays such as Boesman and Lena, People and certainly, Aloes, that "They also serve who only stand and wait,"[22] that the act of witnessing validates existence, the spectrum of life that ranges through pathos and suffering to affirmation and achievement. There are those who withdraw from the fray, notably Johnnie in Hello and Goodbye, whom the playwright depicts on crutches, a metaphor for his inadequacy. It is within this overall context that one must of necessity view Piet, whose brand of passive resistance to adversity constitutes an act of faith. Piet eludes those who would conveniently categorise him. Others doubt his veracity, his intention and motivation but, like the aloe that has not yet bloomed and defies identification, he remains a figure with an aura of mystery. It is interesting to note that Fugard entertained no doubts about the Port Elizabeth character on whom he based Piet, although rumours circulated persistently. What impressed Fugard then was a feeling that "he is indestructible, that you'd have to kill him, that you could never drive him mad,"[23] a response he registers with clarity and conviction in the play. Furthermore, Piet's preoccupation with names endows him

with a regenerative power denied him in marriage. Naming the name is tantamount to an act of creation, a divinely inspired capacity in a political landscape of desolation and death. The elements of waiting, naming and hoping--"I'll have to wait for it to flower. That makes identification much easier. And it will!"--fuse in defiant survival and rebirth (Aloes, p. 8). Aloe ferox, aristata, arborescens and ciliaris are brave antecedents and, more importantly, progenitors of life. Piet's naming mania is in reality a religious ritual, a christening of an unusual sort, a consecration of survival mechanisms on which any future in this harsh terrain, both literally and figuratively, must be based. There is also the perspective propounded by Fugard himself, who stated in an interview: "I want to name the name. It's a false attempt at an act of possession."[24] There is a degree of ambiguity as Piet does not confer his name (a marriage of identities) or one of his choice (parent/child/possession) but that traditionally designated to a species. It is essentially a scholastic search crowned with discovery, a contrast to his personal journey through life to nowhere. He clings to an emblem of faith and, in that empathetic sense alone, makes it his personal logo.

Whether it is the badge of the "impotent white liberal,"[25] as Dennis Walder alleges, is arguable. The South African legal order, the role of its custodians, the wide powers conferred on the police under the Terrorism Act, the manner in which this law is implemented, coupled with the growing number of deaths of detainees, produced, as Professor John Dugard points out,[26] a new awareness of the nature of interrogation in solitary confinement and a deeper concern for the persons detained. This law and other detention-without-trial laws certainly

inhibited extra-parliamentary white liberal activity and stringent repression effectively snuffed out protest and incipient revolution.

"We've only seen it get worse. And it's going to go on getting worse," Steve tells Piet (Aloes, p. 68), attempting to justify his decision to emigrate. While in prison Steve seriously considered suicide. Dugard points out that there is evidence that prolonged isolation produces mental disorientation among South African detainees. Some have been obliged to receive mental treatment after their experience and others, after their release, have related the disquieting effects such confinement has upon the mind. Professor Dugard concludes:

> Although designed to combat terrorism the Terrorism Act has itself become an instrument of terror and a symbol of repression. Both in its form and in its implementation it must be seen as a statute that creates a new species of cruel and unusual punishment, one that runs counter to Western traditions in the field of criminal justice.[27]

Piet rejects Steve's assertion that they fought for a lost cause. Steve's defence of his actions is acceptable and serves as a forum for presenting political and social realities that impinge disastrously on the lives and times of black people in South Africa. In emotive terms he describes the inroads of apartheid laws on secure family life, in particular, the Group Areas Act, entailing compulsory population removals and resettlement with all the ensuing dislocation of family life. Wide powers conferred on the police to enforce the laws enable them to enter private homes at all times.

During the early 1960s, there were, according to Professor Dugard, numerous prosecutions of persons charged with furthering the aims of the ANC and PAC.[28] In the Port Elizabeth area

alone 918 persons were arrested in 1963-64 on charges of furthering the aims of the ANC. Many of these trials were held in remote towns in the Eastern Cape far from the glare of publicity and the assistance of counsel. Severe sentences were often imposed.

The character of Steve Daniels appears to be a composite character largely derived from Fugard's observations of and friendship with Steve Tobias, a coloured activist from Schauder Township outside Port Elizabeth, and his knowledge of the fate of Edward Daniels, a coloured man sentenced for acts of sabotage. Edward Daniels was sentenced to 15 years imprisonment, a far heavier sentence than that imposed upon his white colleagues in the African Resistance Movement, a factor that would have rankled during his imprisonment, lending credence to Steve's sentiment expressed with bitterness: "If I had a white skin, I'd also find lots of reasons for not leaving this country," clearly a reference to a broad range of privileges including relative leniency in court sentences not accorded to second-class citizens (Aloes, p. 67). It is highly probable that Fugard was aware of and focused on this man as the name denotes, a composite of Steve Tobias and Edward Daniels. John Harris, the man who features thematically in Fugard's Orestes, belonged to the ARM. Although Harris detonated a bomb in the concourse of the Johannesburg railway station killing one woman and injuring several other people, the ARM was committed to acts of sabotage to property alone. Long terms of imprisonment were meted out to those found guilty. As an actor, playwright and director with close connections with black actors in Port Elizabeth, the prosecutions under the Terrorism Act and the Suppression of Communism Act would have weighed heavily on

Fugard. "I turn with fear from the thought of the final reckoning. We will have to pay and with lives and hope and dignity for all of these that we destroyed," he wrote with bitterness.[29]

Fugard and Piet Bezuidenhout find no solace for man's afflictions in the God/man relationship, an idle and meaningless dialectic. Rather Fugard through Piet states his commitment to Camus's dictum: "This earth remains my first and last love."[30] It is an attitude Steve Daniels, devoid of hope, can no longer share. Cynical and sceptical he no longer has belief in man. Bitterness suffuses his life. Disillusioned and demotivated, he no longer believes there is a future for his family in South Africa. His suspicion that Piet is an informer poisons their friendship and represents a further step down the slippery slope of failure for Piet, another death of sorts for which poetry, the resources of the literary mind and heritage, has no answer. For all three characters there is wastage and wreckage. There is little to salvage from the past. "It's a life lying around on that lounge floor like a pile of rubbish! That's what I'm trying to squeeze into a few old suitcases ..." (Aloes, p. 60), Steve tells Gladys, the metaphor of packing up a life a dramatic reversal of that in Hello and Goodbye, when Hester unpacks her disordered past. Despite his desire to sever connections with the past, Steve is burdened with memories he cannot abandon, memories he holds dear. "Before you know it, you're sitting there on the floor smiling at a memory," he tells Gladys (Aloes, p. 61).

Tied to their histories, Fugard's characters are hampered in their attempts to start anew, bruised and battered by their pasts, Gladys by symbolic rape, Steve by incarceration, Piet by

failure. The effort at regeneration daunts Steve, eludes Gladys and engages Piet. With a searing image clearly derived from the playwright's own creative struggle to give birth to new lives on paper, Gladys confides:

> It wasn't for want of trying, Peter. I sat down every night, opened it ... but then nothing. The ink used to clot and dry on the nib while I sat looking at the blank page (Aloes, p. 78).

"The blank page," the nightmare of sterility for the writer and for Gladys, life's wasteland, literally a no-man's-land, a concept hinted at in the final sequence of Aloes, is fully confronted and explored by Fugard in Mecca. Society has symbolically ravaged Gladys, leaving her with a painful, transferred consciousness of contamination, of being a fallen woman, deflowered, a state of being antithetical to the external flowering process carefully monitored and nurtured by Piet, who clearly takes his role as one of society's caretakers seriously. His unblighted idealism and undefiled integrity are a silent reproach and irk Gladys. She recognizes her urgent need to see him brutalized as she has been. She is able to stand back, a woman divided, viewing both parts with a measure of detachment, hating what she has become yet no longer able to return to where she once stood in confident trust by his side.

Without a helpmate, Piet focuses on his aloes with a love he might have given to his children had he fathered any. It is an interest, an abiding passion and love for the possibility they represent in an otherwise arid terrain. Piet is one of life's bridge builders, carefully cultivating values to ensure continuity of what he believes to be right and enduring. As N. P. van Wyk Louw, the Afrikaans poet and philosopher, stated in his book Liberale Nasionalisme:

> there is no spiritual bridge between the dominant man

> and the dominated other than the bridge built by those who, loving liberty for itself, will not be content until it is enjoyed, not only by themselves, but by all those to whom it is now denied.[31]

Van Wyk Louw and Fugard viewed the polemics of Afrikaner survival in the same light: the recovery of a past outside Africa (symbolized by Piet's passion for literature), the practice of true justice (not the perversion of it experienced by Steve), and the reverence for dialogue (not the futile isolation of Fugard's characters). Van Wyk Louw stated that "Because we can do no other, we must think,"[32] and it is in this spirit and with this intention that Piet returns to his unidentified aloe.

The audience leaves the theatre with a central question unanswered. Who is the informer? The issue that enables Gladys to destroy the friendship between Steve and Piet. In an interview the writer of this thesis conducted with actor Bill Curry,[33] he suggested that the burden of guilt lay with Gladys, who conceivably recorded every detail of Piet's activities and associations in diaries confiscated and retained by the security police. He pointed out that Gladys was hostile to Piet's political involvement and jealous of his friendship with Steve and the comrades, with whom she had little or nothing in common. He stated:

> My theory is that Gladys' diaries did it. The police found there the complete pattern of movement. Mentally ill, a-political, loathing everything, she reported every detail. It would account for her extreme distress when they kept the diaries. She uses hyperbole as a protective device.

In view of Mr Curry's role as Steve in a production directed by Fugard in London, I asked him whether he viewed Steve's departure for England on a one-way exit permit as a betrayal of former ideological loyalties. Mr Curry replied:

> He was a wretch for betraying his friendship with Piet. He emerged from prison with a degrading self-pity and Athol wrote it into the text deliberately. I don't think Athol has a great admiration for the Steves of this world. He did suffer but he wallowed in his suffering. When he expressed reluctance to leave South Africa I suspect he was rationalising the situation, claiming he was leaving because of his children.

Mr Curry pointed out that many in Steve's position in the sixties, a bleak period in which they were threatened by police and government, moved under the Group Areas Act and denied privileges granted to whites, remained on despite these negative factors.

Gladys clearly sustains her dislike of Steve to the end and plots the exposure of his suspicions and the consequent disintegration of the remains of his friendship with Piet. It is a ploy and Steve asks, with justification: "Are you playing games?" (Aloes, p. 74). For Fugard, game-playing is a legitimate distancing technique that enables his characters to explore painful personal issues. His characters here and elsewhere, in plays such as People and Blood Knot, play games to provoke revelations and to confront reality with insight derived from an understanding of personal conflicts. The games inadvertently serve to provide clues and keys to solutions for pressing problems. The game, pretence, heightens perceptions, while colouring the canvas with distant details that add definition to the design.

What emerges overall is the conviction that the playwright himself played the political game to expose the complexities of three characters. As Walder points out the characters are deeply affected by politics yet Aloes is not a political play.[34] Fugard merely embodies all levels of action in one reality, politics. The provocative image of drought that lays

bare the bleached bones of belief pervades and unifies a play that is primarily concerned with physical, mental and emotional survival. Peeling away the desicated layers from his characters' souls, Fugard breaks any conspiracy of silence and through their pain he identifies the mad dogs of society.

"Master Harold"..and the boys

There are definable links between the later Port Elizabeth plays. Aloes and Master Harold, as Sheila Roberts points out, deal with failure in the relationship "between blacks and whites who, up to the point of crisis, have enjoyed friendships of intense intimacy."[35]

Hally, the white boy, betrays the complex parent/child bond established with Sam as effectively as Gladys wrecks the friendship between Piet and Steve. In both plays the didactic tone is dominant, explicitly referred to in the title of Aloes and implicitly believed in by Sam, who, as Hally's mentor and surrogate father prepares him for the demands of manhood. Whether lessons are learnt in either play is debatable indeed, but what is true is Sam's assertion that "there was a hell of a lot of teaching going on ... one way or the other."[36] In both plays Fugard is preoccupied with morality and the challenge and difficulty of sustaining person-to-person contact within a society that fragments, distorts and prohibits interaction of this sort. In both plays we see the frightening consequences of societal pressures, prejudice and power-structure and the consequent appalling cost and breakdown in human terms.

Ultimately Fugard is dramatising the lessons of life as noted, collated and interpreted by an astute observer, himself,

a man infinitely saddened and moved by the fate of those marooned on unassailable islands of pain. It seems to Sheila Roberts that no lessons are learnt, Hally finally turning away from Sam.[37] Yet the play itself, text and production combined, are adequate proof that a lesson has been learnt to which Fugard is testifying again in his self-appointed role as witness and with the poignant intensity of the artist baring his secret guilt to the world, a revelation that results in therapeutic catharsis for him and collectively for his audiences. Fugard's use of his own life and that of Sam and Willie in Master Harold placed him under an obligation to tell the truth, to once again assume his consecrated role as witness. Stemming from profound and private pain, his characters reflect his grief at certain events and circumstances. "What the audience must do is grieve but forgive," he told Mel Gussow.[38]

Master Harold had as lengthy a gestation period as Aloes. In September 1972 Fugard conducted an interesting theatrical experiment with Kani and Ntshona, in which he presented them with an image: three to four tables and chairs representing the lounge of a local hotel crowded with "a type of arrogant and self-satisfied white student" being served by two black waiters. He structured the improvised exercise along lines strongly paralleled in Master Harold, viz. two waiters in the lounge before the arrival of the first customer, the crescendo of activity and tensions to the climax and finally, the two of them alone together, as they tidy up and come to terms with another day in their lives.[39] Fugard stripped away externals in an effort to find the basic challenge and decided then that one table and one chair, symbolic of whiteness and master, and

their relationship to it as black servants, contained the essential dramatic elements of what they were attempting to explore and express, leading them towards the ontological dilemma arising from role playing. The experiment provoked questions that surfaced from the sub-text to the action, questions that arise in Master Harold: "Who am I? where am I? who is where?"[40] all issues centring on the mask and the face behind the mask, pretence versus truth. This early foray into the complexity of the master/servant relationship provided a point of departure for Master Harold, in particular the opening stage directions, which provide not only a key to Fugard's creative thought, indicating his depth of immersion in on-going themes, but the painstaking craft of the actor/director who knows from experience that the scene works. The stage directions of Master Harold, reminiscent of the 1972 sketch, stipulate: "Tables and chairs have been cleared and are stacked on one side except for one which stands apart with a single chair."[41]

As with most of his plays, Master Harold started with a generative image that assumed an ascendancy and inevitability in the mind of the playwright. Until the last moment he avoided the issue that festered as his inscrutable secret within a tormented psyche, until its exposure in the brief stage direction: "He spits in Sam's face" (Master Harold, p. 56). In his Notebooks Fugard recounts this episode that came from acute loneliness. "Don't suppose I will ever deal with the shame that overwhelmed me the second after I had done that," he wrote in March 1961.[42] In writing Master Harold, the successful fusion of "the inscrutable personal secret and the shattering public event,"[43] he not only asked people to look at

an ugly act but also dealt with the consequences in a responsible and moral manner. "If you ask somebody to look at something ugly and you don't deal with that encounter, you're damaging the person you've asked to look at it," he said.[44] It was Fugard's concept of the artist's responsibility to his actors and audience but primarily to himself. In writing those stage directions and exploring its aftermath, he atoned for his sin of unwarranted abuse. In 1961 Fugard wrote a poem about Sam Semela, that ended with the lines "Come sit before me and like someone with Jesus I will wipe my spit out of your eyes."[45] Master Harold is his exculpatory exercise. The spitting, crude, vulgar and ugly, the climactic and central trauma of the play, provided its internal dynamic and its emotional complexity. In directing the Broadway production in 1982, Fugard rehearsed the scene with Zakes Mokae, with whom he had travelled the length and breadth of South Africa decades previously with The Blood Knot. The two forged a brotherly bond that rivalled in devotion Hally's attachment to Sam. Fugard in rehearsal held Zakes' head lovingly: "I just spat it wet, and the poison was out," he stated simply.[46]

While a liberating experience for Fugard, it is a travesty of baptism for Sam, a voodoo ritual performed by a despotic adolescent. With his perverse action Hally wil fully defiles his friendship with Sam, consciously damaging their bond; the reverse of true baptism that purifies and regenerates. As Hally's spit glistens in great gobs on his face, Sam stands before the audience as an initiate, one admitted to the exclusive ranks of black brotherhood, alienated and betrayed by his white "son." If the spitting impacts on Fugard's life and on that of Hally, it marks the dawn of a new

perception for Sam, who subsequently draws closer to Willie. There is a perceptible shift of loyalties--the divisions become clearcut, abrasive and apparently irreconcilable. Whether it is legitimate to extend the human drama into the political arena thereby damning any potential for black/white co-operative survival is debat able. If political themes are present as overtones in Aloes, they are reduced to undertones in Master Harold. Fugard insisted Master Harold was a story about a little boy and two men who happen to be black. Viewed from this perspective, Hally's attack on Sam is the laceration of a father image, an interpretation offered by Sam himself, who tersely remarks "the face you should be spitting in is your father's ... but you used mine, because you think you're safe inside your fair skin ..." (Master Harold, p. 56). Yet Hally's abuse of Sam would be unthinkable if Sam had not been black and, within the context of Port Elizabeth and South Africa in the 1950s, subservient and without rights. Humiliated by his home situation, Hally ensures a measure of authority and restructures his image in terms sanctioned by the society in which he lives, the framework within which his own father operates. "You must teach the boys to show you more respect, my son," he urged Hally (Master Harold, p. 55), the smug assurance of superiority in every syllable, the result of socio-political indoctrination to which Hally himself is neither exempt nor immune. The fact that his words and actions are exactly those his father would have countenanced and approved of is Hally's submission not only to the despair his father's return provokes but also to the order Hally inwardly despises. By adopting the verbal and physical armour of white South Africa, he crushes his own spirit in an orgy of self-

immolation. Beaten and dejected, he defects from the ranks of idealists and goes over to the other side, a step that increases his self-doubt and self-hate. Walder concedes that the defining image of the play, the living moment when a white boy spits in the face of a black servant leads to a shared awareness of "personal roots of racialism", "the motive force for some of the worst excesses of our time".[46a] On the one hand he castigates Fugard for not analysing that experience or being "clear about its social and historical implications" and on the other he censures his homiletic urge and "heavy-handed explication."[47] It is, however, a strength rather than a weakness that intent, execution and response are rendered in visual rather than verbal terms. The generative image is just that, startling action performed centre-stage for all to see and, vicariously, to endure. Fugard builds tension painstakingly, choosing elements with consummate care, allowing Sam and Hally to trade insults until an inner momentum spirals inexorably to the horrifying climax. John Kani, who took the role of Sam in the 1983 Baxter Theatre production, told the writer of the thesis in an interview that for a black man to show his "arse" to another was an insult, expressive of the grossest contempt.

Hally's individual act of cruelty symbolises the reprehensible actions of a nation and the debilitating effects of apartheid. Fugard never forgave himself and the burden mounted with the years, flailing himself with guilt and remorse as Hally is bound to do, and, inevitably, Fugard's audiences, who suffer collective shame.

Within any society there are those who regard it as their privilege to dominate others. It can be a class, creed or

colour phenomenon. The fact that South African audiences know in an intimate way the strictures that deformed Hally's outlook and soul makes for a greater appreciation of the play's intrinsic issues and a greater impact on attitudes. Yet Master Harold has been successful internationally and enthusiastically received world-wide, appreciated in countries where colour prejudice is not deeply entrenched. Audiences have detected its relevance to all capable of perceiving the narrowness of man, his ability to hurt and harm those placed perforce in a vulnerable situation. This peculiarly South African play rises above considerations of geography and local politics, just as Chekhov's plays are not relevant to Russians alone. Rising from local roots Master Harold achieves universality and is accessible to all. Viewed holistically, it presents a vision of harmony and it is this positive perspective that informs the play with hope.

Fugard's appointment with crucial moments in his youth, dealing with ghosts and accepting painful conflicts, enabled him to come to terms with the past. Delineating with clarity his genesis as a man, the vulnerability of the artist as a young fool, he extends his range of vision, focusing not only on questions but also on answers, not solely on crucifying dilemmas but on solutions. Fugard's guilt and Hally's shame are undeniably at the anguished heart of the play, yet Sam's inspired tuition, Willie's supportive encouragement and the collective pain of black men more than counterbalance Hally's importance as focal point in any evaluation of the play. Fugard preserves the balance, a challenging task in any openly confessional work. The detachment of a critic strengthens his portraiture, his objective artistry heightens the validity of his portrayal.

It is as much Sam's play as it is Hally's, with Willie never there as just a foil but firmly integrated into the text, engendering solutions peculiarly his own, resolving the crisis in a quiet, gentle and convincing display of black solidarity that never excludes compassion and even forgiveness of the "Little white boy, long trousers now, but he's still little boy" (Master Harold, p. 57). Neither the intelligent jester nor the buffoon, there is about him a comic element that Fugard exploits gainfully. Willie differs radically from Sam: his simplicity contrasts with the older man's intellectual complexity and he looks up to Sam as a leader with wisdom and vision. Sam's position in the triangular configuration is challenged but undamaged. As poignantly revealed in Fugard's dedication to the play "For Sam and HDF," as a surrogate he is as much Hally's father as HDF, the biological parent. In the taut and tense structure of what critics referred to as a "scant one hundred minutes,"[48] his authority never wavers. It is a beneficent influence, moulding, shaping, coaxing and informing Hally in the art of manhood, a dominant theme in the play and a distinctive feature in Fugard's work generally, understandable in the light of Fugard's own warring emotions towards the crippled, alcoholic father he loved and despised.

Modern psychology highlights the anti-establishment rebellion of adolescent youth. One can therefore understand the confusion and pain of a boy presented with a deformed father image, a man crippled in body and warped in soul. In Master Harold Fugard has progressed a long way from his depiction in Hello and Goodbye of the mutilating effect of pathological father/son interdependence. As an atheist Hally has none of Johnnie's Calvinist reverence for paternity; and

while honouring his mother, he is painfully repelled by failings and flaws that erode his tolerance and respect for his father.

Both Johnnie and Hally possess poignant awareness of someone else's suffering and need to be loved. Fugard himself viewed his crippled father sympathetically, seeing his remaining leg as a final vestige of independence, and fully understanding his fear of amputation, a loss comparable to castration. The truncated image of manhood is always there, whether in the mind of the playwright or those of his characters and hence Hally's preoccupation with men of magnitude, who compensate him for his mean and narrow life. It is an eternal and futile search for an ideal father, a search conducted on many levels. Hally finally cannot evade his filial responsibilities, however repugnant he finds the "stinking chamberpots full of phlegm and piss ..." (Master Harold, p. 48).

Fugard delineates a profound emotional ambivalence in a response that ranges from endearments such as "chum" and "pal" to the frustrated realization that there is no escape from his domestic hell. Hally's friendship with Sam makes the burden tolerable. Theirs is a complex bond: on a scholastic level the boy is tutor to the man; on an emotional plane the man is father to the boy; on an ideological level, the boy is the man's master. All three levels are interwoven in an authentically osmotic relationship. From Hally, Sam acquires knowledge and gives of his wisdom in return. Having suffered the indignities of an apartheid society, he retains his sense of personal dignity, worth and concern for others. This is manifest in his caring and compassionate involvement with

Hally, whom he shields, supports, upbraids and forgives. His education is defective but his perceptions are profound and his outlook enlightened compared to that of Hally, who reflects the shortcomings of a crippled society based on the myth of white superiority. Together they present a broad range of issues, concerns and responses, all enriching the play's texture: on one level we see the emotional turbulence of a teenager subjected to domestic stress; on another we admire values posited and never abandoned by Sam through the many vicissitudes of the play; and, finally, their friendship demonstrates a redemptive capacity to condone. Certain elements appear irreconcilable: Sam's compassion and insight versus Hally's harshness and parental mores; Sam's vision contrasting with Hally's stereotypic racist demands. Yet Sam's ability to forgive is the key to resolving these dilemmas. He is not only Hally's mentor and surrogate father but potentially his redeemer. For this reason the light of scrutiny falls more fully on Hally, whose world is in a constant state of flux. Sam, central to the unfolding drama, is the instrument of enlightenment and, hopefully, change. "He radiated all the qualities a boy could look to and recognize as those of a man," Fugard recalled.[49]

It is significant that the two discuss sex drives without one shred of embarrassment, an aspect of initiation into manhood and life. They talk, listen and respect one another, a process not without difficulties for Hally born into an apartheid world and shackled to its values. As Olivier points out, the revolution has to occur within and between people, thereby dealing a repressive system a severe blow.[50]

It is significant that the isolation of those attributes

at the core of manhood--strength derived not from the dictates of society but from individual integrity--are explored and formulated within an all-male cast, linking the play conceptually with Blood Knot. Both plays share a preoccupation with man-to-man responsibilities, the theme of brotherhood in Blood Knot dovetailing with that of manhood in Master Harold. In both plays there is a disruptive element of violence that drives a wedge between the characters. How to resolve it, what can be salvaged and an evaluation of its cathartic/therapeutic value constitute pulsating sub-texts to the dialogue. In both Blood Knot and Master Harold, worlds where women are present only at the end of a telephone or on receipt of a letter, their intervention is distanced and diluted in impact. The call (Master Harold) or the letter (Blood Knot) may precipitate a crisis but it is the recipient who engages our sympathies, whose resources are challenged and whose response is an explosive dramatic issue. What emerges as a Fugardian value is the playwright's respect for, admiration and sanctification of women's fortitude and loyalty; the strength of these affections and commitments never wavering despite adversity. In Master Harold as in Blood Knot, the matriarchal presence and these concerns generally are in the background and the coping mechanism of men that impinges on their, our and Fugard's concept of manhood is in the foreground.

There are archetypal characteristics in both Sam and Hally, who represent idealism and pragmatism respectively, the Don Quixote and Sancho Panza combination of Cervantes. In many ways Fugard employs a combination of two men in what can be viewed as their love story. For an audience, however, their combined impact suggests a measure of worldly wisdom required

to get through life. The theme of manhood is nuanced and its variants are subtly expressed and defined: father/son; man-to-man; white boy/black man; black man/black man; and black man/white man.

Although it has been alleged that "we are left with a resonant image of brotherhood, that brotherhood from which the white 'master' has excluded himself,"[51] it would be erroneous to accept this as the pointed moral of the play. As has been shown, it is one of many strands woven into Fugard's complex dissertation on manhood primarily in the human context and then in the South African situation generally. That the evolution of boy to man, the traumas of a youth pinioned by home demands and shackled by prejudice, ultimately leads to statements by men of conscience about the injustice of apartheid is part of the play's narrative drive, relationships and events spilling into ideological areas. It is never forced and a natural consequence of what Fugard termed "the way we used to stretch our souls and dream."[52]

It is in relation to the visionary thrust of the play that its imagery becomes pre-eminent, influencing thoughts, actions, moods and feelings to a remarkable degree. Two images in particular are responsible for the poetic texture of a script that is at all times--with the exception of Willie's truncated grammar accurately reflecting a pidgin-English idiom--literate: that of dancing as a metaphor for harmony; and kite-flying as a figurative expression of man's aspirations to higher ideals and release from petty earth-bound considerations and constraints.

The central theme of manhood is thematically linked to key words in the play that in their phonetic structure reinforce

one another, strengthening the association formed subconsciously in the minds of Fugard's audience. Words such as "Master," "men," "magnitude," and "miracles," represent a progression from the cold authoritarian control implicit in the word "Master" to the exemplary role played in the affairs of the world by "men of magnitude." The achievement of harmony, attaining and implementing the true values of manhood so that harmony can prevail, is the elusive "miracle" Hally refers to so poignantly.

Within this phonetic category, one can, ironically, insert the word "Mom," the matriarchal element so dominant in Hally's life, the breadwinner in the family and the source of his financial security, ensuring through tears his filial submission and subjugation, a potentially emasculating experience. Whether in Freudian terms there is an Oedipal attachment to his mother is arguable, although Hally certainly wishes his father were elsewhere. With a crippled father establishing an inadequate father image, a dominant mother could threaten a boy's shaky foundations of manhood and inhibit his psychological maturation. Hally is clearly an adolescent in bondage.

The visual potency of dance envelops the play, from Willie's reasonable degree of dancing competence, through Sam's dazzling display of artistry, to the final image of the two waiters dancing sadly and harmoniously - while Sarah Vaughan croons aptly and consolingly: "Little man you've had a busy day" (Master Harold, p. 60) - a visually powerful image that partially resolves strife and helps to re-establish closeness and communication of a kind.[53]

In physical terms dancing is an activity consistently

engaged in and it therefore generates naturally and logically expository argument between Sam and Hally that takes full flight in Sam's enthusiastic and deeply-felt exegesis:

> There's no collisions out there, Hally. Nobody trips or stumbles or bumps into anybody else. That's what that moment is all about. To be one of those finalists on that dance floor is like ... like being in a dream about a world in which accidents don't happen (Master Harold, p. 45).

He accurately concedes that in real life, "None of us knows the steps and there's no music playing" (Master Harold, p. 46), yet exhorts Hally to dance life like a champion rather than a beginner. The refulgent image of dancing, so central to the action, theme and denouement of the play, serves Fugard well in dramatic terms. It is easy to find an inept dancer amusing and easier still for an audience to translate this into figurative terms. The dance imagery and the kite-flying sequence are indicators flashing with neon intensity of a better order remote from desolation, both material and spiritual, and the emotional poverty depicted in his earlier work. The imagery is not a Fugardian sugar coating to make the failings less offensive but rather an ideological framework, a messianic concept of goodness out there to which all should aspire and which is capable of informing existence with beauty, thereby achieving an apotheosis of the human condition. Fugard successfully encapsulates the dramatic actions within this overall view of man vis a vis other men. Olivier's assertion[54] that Fugard is holding out the possibility of joining together under clear skies to fly a kite once more is contradicted in the text in lines that indicate not only a present of unrelieved gloom beyond redemption but also the genuine ignorance and impotence of the white man:

> Hally It's still raining, Sam. You can't fly kites

> on rainy days, remember.
> Sam So what do we do? Hope for better weather tomorrow?
> Hally (helpless gesture) I don't know. I don't know anything anymore (Master Harold, p. 59).

The potential for change appears blighted. Hally, overwhelmed by his father's return and pained by his explosive altercation with Sam effectively rejects his biological father and the alter-pater ideal represented by Sam, an emotional upheaval that unsettles him and leaves him unbalanced in a world of uncertain values. Like his father, he, too, is crippled, psychologically maimed by a depressing home situation and spiritually poisoned by racist sentiments imbibed consciously and sub-consciously from his environment. Whether the antidote offered by Sam--cherishing ideals and rejecting racial bigotry--can counteract the venom, is left unanswered. Clearly Sam hopes and believes that Hally, enlightened and aware of social injustice will make the right choice and commit himself to the path of protest:

> You don't have to sit up there by yourself. You know what that bench means now, and you can leave it any time you choose. All you've got to do is stand up and walk away from it (Master Harold, p. 60).

The image of kite-flying encapsules a multiplicity of meanings. The gift of an empathetic man to a disconsolate boy, the kite compels Hally to look up at the sky rather than shamefaced at the ground and symbolizes for Hally, tied as he is to bleak realities, his transferred yearning to be free. It represents, too, his unfulfilled longing to recreate the fleeting beauty of this miracle and to perpetuate its message of hope and beauty, the unrealized true potential of life. It bonds naturally with the thrust towards social reform, the vision dictating a search for an instrument to translate theory

into practice. It is Fugard's strength in this play that the metaphors flow into one another, reinforcing central themes and binding the play's many constituents into a cohesive whole. Hally's academic discussion of men of magnitude in which he and Sam focus on social reformers and political liberators, highlights the visionaries of the world, men whose work and dreams emancipated the oppressed, relieved the suffering of men and offered deliverance from servitude, men such as Napoleon, Abraham Lincoln, Tolstoy, Jesus and Fleming, and in a later sequence of the play, the benevolent influence of Mahatma Gandhi, the Pope, and General Smuts (Master Harold, p. 47), all striving to achieve harmony in a disunited and violent world. Hally's preoccupation with "the intellectual heritage of our civilization" is Fugard's own, the obsessive search of artist/litterateur/philosopher for enlightenment, a quest that informs his work as a whole.

Scholarly references elsewhere--at this point one recalls the use of Darwin's material in Statements--abound in Master Harold, separate sparks that fuse into a beacon of inspiration to light the way for those treading a path of relative darkness in a benighted land. Throughout there is a balance, an easy equilibrium between the flights of fancy that swoop miraculously like kites through unfettered heavens of the imagination and the evils of an unjustly punitive system of which Sam is the eloquent spokesman. Viewed from this perspective, his excessively detailed description of police beatings restores reality; Sam's mind may keep company with Jesus and Abraham Lincoln but his feet are rooted in the opprobrium of South African society. It is, of course, valid to construe the references to beatings as Sheila Roberts does:

> Hallie, a boy, lacks power in the social hierarchy just as women and blacks do. So he (figuratively) beats Sam down to give himself a temporary delusion of power.[55]

Both Sam and Hally are beaten in different ways, the former by an inequitable political system, the latter by a disadvantaged home background. Their suffering, albeit from different roots, enables them to understand one another profoundly in moments of harmonious interaction. Sam and Hally are both victims, the one of society and the other of home circumstances. Throughout the play the well-articulated search for a better world is multi-faceted: personal, national and global. We are as profoundly concerned with Hally's private tribulations as we are with the broader humanitarian concerns with which Fugard inexorably widens the perspective of his play and the vision of his audience.

It is here that one can validly pose questions such as: What is the relationship between the personal drama unfolding in the play and Fugard's consciousness of the inequities of the South African apartheid system? Are the references to the separation of the races and the colour question valid within the overall dramatic scheme or are they interpolated for polemical reasons only? Do the political references grow relevantly and naturally from the characters or are they superimposed, thereby creating a credibility gap? Fugard achieves a fusion of the political and personal personae. The central characters are authentic, home-grown products, with roots nourished by prejudice and bias. While eager for enlightenment and honest in their aspirations for a just society, the racial stereotypes lurk beneath the surface. One cannot convincingly create characters bound to a

particular place and time without highlighting the specifics that constitute the uniqueness of that area--and Fugard is, above all else, a regional writer, who derives his inspiration from his homeland, bedevilled as it might be with an inhumane ideology that stirs him to the quick.

Sam, as an intelligent and perceptive man of 45, would have come to a grudging and bitter acceptance of the prohibitions governing his life. Yet this understanding of the political status quo fails to inhibit his love for Hally, an attachment that is an intensely personal issue, whereas Hally's reflections are peppered with colour connotations and his final assertion of superiority is made from the vantage point of entrenched racial privileges. As harsh as his demands finally are, as traumatised as an audience might be by this confrontation, given the South African setting one cannot deny the probability of those sentiments.

If many of the conflicts appear irreconcilable, Fugard literally introduced a deus ex machina in a novel way--the divinity and healing power of Sarah Vaughan's voice issuing from a twentieth century machine, the old-style juke box. It is not just a stage prop evocative of the 1950s. With the full power of poetic language, Fugard elevates its impact and transmutes its function so that the machine comes to life, "blushing its way through a spectrum of soft, romantic colours" (Master Harold, p. 60). It endues the ending with a celebratory note, an intention confirmed in another context by Fugard who, on hearing Zakes Mokae's reading of the script, commented: "I just saw him light up like a bloody jukebox."[56] Harmony is restored and the audience is left with an image of black brotherhood, testimony to Fugard's ability to go beyond

the limitations of his own position, "expressing the dissidence of a race and class not his own."[57]

Master Harold, in Jungian terms, is Fugard's "eruption of the unconscious into the conscious,"[58] the attempted resolution of conflicts in the personal realm and beyond. It is a direct expression of Fugard's individual thoughts and philosophies in an acutely personal idiom. "Master Harold marks the start of a new family in terms of my plays. By that I mean the plays I might have left to write will reflect a greater degree of personal statement. I'll be coming up front with more personal statements in future," Fugard stated.[59] Despite its deeply personal statements, Master Harold's moral issues are as sharply defined. Brendan Gill of the New Yorker acknowledged that on a deeper level the play revealed "the heartbreak implicit in every failure of respect and affection that takes place between human beings of whatever colour, gender, age and social position."[60] John Kani, who played the part of Sam in the South African production testified to the "bigger values" inherent in the play, that good points unite people more strongly than their differences divide them. "If we can but save one soul each night from its own self-destruction, then that's enough to keep me playing Sam for the rest of my life," he said.[61] Whether these cathartic intentions are realized is arguable. What is certain is the poignant, emotive and discomfiting nature of the play, revealing the ugliness of South African racism at its worst and the compassionate insights of human nature at its best. The broad range of thought and feeling is informed with humour, what Fugard terms "a laugh factor,"[62] vigorously relieving the gloom and mitigating the harshness of a cruel, frustrated and intellectually

arrogant young man.

This and other aspects of the play testify to the skills of a master craftsman, who alternates light relief with tension, building relentlessly towards a dramatic climax and sustaining the crescendo to the end. Fugard uses a full range of techniques with great skill, whether flashback recollections to flesh out the biographies of his characters or telephone calls to widen the play's gallery of characters. Despite in-built racial responses, Hally succeeds in partially bridging the divisions of society. He hung around the servants' quarters when his mother ran the Jubilee Boarding House; inwardly he sincerely loves Sam and Willie; and intellectually he comprehends the consequences. For Hally, Sam is a repository of truth, insights and values garnered through many difficult years. He retains an idealism that contrasts sharply with Hally's cynicism, e.g. cherishing the impressive sight of carol singers with "all the candles glowing in the dark," in Fugardian terms the conquering power of good over bad, the power of light eclipsing Satanic darkness in the world and in the minds of men, a vision summarily dismissed by Hally for whom the dreams of life have turned into nightmares. In his eyes his life is antithetically opposed to Sam's vision: "Nobody knows the steps, there's no music, the cripples are also out there tripping up everybody ..." (Master Harold, p. 51). Hally's venom spills over, demeaning Sam, defiling their friendship and lashing him with racial clichés: "You're only a servant in here, and don't forget it," and "He is your boss," and "He's a white man and that's good enough for you" (Master Harold, p. 53). On dangerous ground, he straddles two worlds, the black and the white. With every insult ground

gained through worthwhile human contact is lost, perhaps irretrievably, as Hally slides along a path of alienation away from a supportive system that sustained him through a bleak and singularly unhappy childhood. With his reversion to racial stereotypes, he destroys the fabric of friendship based on mutual affection and regard. It is a measure of Fugard's skill as a playwright that he handles the ebb and flow of human passions with an assured hand, retaining a smooth sequence of movements as Hally withdraws and Sam advances.

The reaction and response of South African audiences, observed repeatedly by the writer of this thesis in Cape Town and in Stellenbosch was one of enthusiastic endorsement not only of the quality of performance but also of the Fugardian vision as a whole. All performances were followed by prolonged standing ovations that appeared to the observer as applause specifically directed at the forgiving nature of Sam, who held the key to any future peaceful resolution of painful areas of conflict. It was this wholehearted audience response that ultimately validated the content of the play not only as an honest evaluation of inter-racial relationships within the South African setting, but the exculpation from blame and guilt of those knowingly or unknowingly participating in an evil system.

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[2] Dennis Walder, Athol Fugard (London: Macmillan, 1984), p. 110. [2a] Dennis Walder, p. 110.

[3] Athol Fugard, Notebooks (Johannesburg: A. D. Donker, 1983), p. 230.

[4] Athol Fugard, A Lesson from Aloes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), p. 17. All further references to this play appear in the text.

[5] Lee Harris, "The Apartheid Buster," in Scene, London, No. 19, 23 February 1963, pp. 30-31.

[6] Wortham, p. 181.

[7] André Brink, A Dry White Season (London: W. H. Allen, 1979), title page.

[8] Theseus in Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream (Act V Scene 1), states:

> Lovers and madmen have such seething brains,
> Such shaping fantasies, that apprehend
> More than cool reason ever comprehends.
> The lunatic, the lover, and the poet,
> Are of imagination all compact:
> ....
> The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
> Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing
> A local habitation and a name.

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[15] Walder, p. 118.

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[17] Margaret Munro, "Some Aspects of Visual Codes in Fugard," in English in Africa, 9 No. 2, October 1982, p. 23.

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[32] Katzew, p. 16.

[33] Interview conducted by Anne Sarzin with Bill Curry, 18 July 1986, at the Baxter Theatre, Cape Town. Curry played the part of Steve in the original 1979 Market Theatre production of Aloes in Johannesburg, which transferred to the Cottesloe Theatre at The National, London.

[34] Walder, p. 117.

[35] Sheila Roberts, "'No Lessons Learnt': Reading the Texts of Fugard's A Lesson from Aloes and Master Harold..and the Boys," in English in Africa, 9 No. 2, October 1982, p. 28.

[36] Athol Fugard, "Master Harold" ... and the boys (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 59. All further references to this play appear in the text.

[37] Roberts, p. 33.

[38] Gussow, p. 93.

[39] Fugard, Notebooks, p. 202.

[40] Fugard, Notebooks, p. 202.

[41] Fugard, Master Harold, p. 3.

[42] Fugard, Notebooks, p. 26.

[43] Athol Fugard and Don Maclennan, "Conversation," in English in Africa, 9 No. 2, October 1982, p. 11.

[44] Fugard and Maclennan, p. 7.

[45] Gussow, p. 87.

[46] Fugard and Maclennan, p. 6.

[46a] Walder, p. 120.

[47] Walder, p. 121.

[48] Fugard and Maclennan, p. 9. Fugard recalled that critics commented in their reviews: "it's a scant one hundred minutes--no interval!"

[49] Gussow, p. 55.

[50] G. Olivier, "Notes on 'Master Harold' ... and the boys at the Yale Rep.," in Standpunte, 162, p. 12.

[51] Walder, p. 124.

[52] Gussow, p. 88.

[53] The dance imagery highlights the derivative use Fugard made of autobiographical material. When Fugard was 12, he and his sister, Glenda, became Eastern Province Ballroom Junior Dancing Champions, a title the "foxtrotting Fugards" held for three to four years. Gussow, p. 55.

[54] Olivier, p. 10.

[55] Roberts, p. 32.

[56] Gussow, p. 90.

[57] Walder, p. 126.

[58] Fugard, Notebooks, p. 198.

[59] Garalt MacLiam, "The Play that Grew Larger than its Hopes," in The Star, 19 April 1983, p. 6.

[60] Elaine Durbach, "S.A. plays capture the hearts of Americans," in Cape Times, 25 April 1983. Photostat copy, page unknown.

[61] Chris Erasmus, "Harold's 'boy' sees role as a duty," in Argus Tonight, 29 September 1983, p. 16.

[62] Garalt MacLiam, "Leaving behind 'Master Harold' and the boys,"in The Star, 20 April 1983, p. 12.

6. Television and Film Scripts

For a man of the theatre, obsessed with the meaning of words, Fugard's excursion into the discipline of film brought a perceptible shift of emphasis away from the verbal to the visual. As Harold Pinter observed: "In a film the actor just walks into a room and it's done, it's all there--or should be!"[1]

It is possible to vary locations, through short episodes to alter points of view rapidly. Cutting from scene to scene, a technique characteristic of the filmic medium, the work is viewed in terms of pictures. Close-ups define non-verbal elements, the small gestures and facial expressions appropriate to the developing situation. Ingmar Bergman, the master of cinematic considerations, spoke of television's immediacy, suggestive force and ability to stimulate the imagination.[2]

The Occupation

In July 1963 Fugard started a play for television, The Occupation, which he finished in that year. As with so many of his plays, it has its roots in Fugard's capacity to observe his fellow human beings. In December 1962 he noted a group of derelicts in Johannesburg, a sherry gang, who spent their time on the benches in front of the city public library. At Christmas they went around as a group with a cardboard box full of bootlaces. In his Notebooks Fugard recorded a scrap of

dialogue: "An ex-serviceman, lady. God Bless you,"[3] a few words that yielded authentic images at the core of his play. The gang impressed him as a-social, violent and self-sufficient. Fugard found his central image, that of four hoboes occupying an empty house, a "dynamic and generative" concept. For him it was simply about walls, "Why we build them, imprison ourselves and live our lives away behind them, why we hate, need, even destroy them."[4]

For the Fugard research student, Occupation offers a wealth of insights into imagery embedded in the artist's creative sub-conscious, imagery glimpsed in previous plays and polished to multi-faceted splendour in his later work. His obsession with clocks is again evident. This time it is not Morris' overwhelming concern with time-imposed schedules in The Blood Knot, nor the hall clock with its memento mori message in People Are Living There. Instead it is the ominous ticking of a clock before an explosion, a warning to those neither quite asleep nor quite awake. In Occupation the ticking clock is a sinister omen.[5] The passage of time and the fear it elicits in men is amplified in another Fugardian metaphor that flickers with varying degrees of intensity through his plays--the use of light and darkness motifs to denote states of mind ranging from optimism and hope to pessimism and despair. The all-enveloping darkness in Blood Knot has a marked spiritual component; in Occupation we encounter encroaching shadows, a darkness that erodes Serge's confidence and control, his fears kept at bay by a small candle, an image given centrality and brought to polished perfection in The Road to Mecca, enshrining the artistic quest for light and strength to negate the darkness of isolation,

fear and ignorance. Aside from the originality and artistry of his imagery, their intellectual content deepens as the playwright matures so that Cappie's casual comment "last year's leaves and other men's rubbish" (Occupation, p. 265) reverberates five years later through the text of Boesman and Lena. "We're whiteman's rubbish," Boesman tells Lena.[6] And they are life's outcasts, the surplus people, redundant and discarded.

The four characters of Occupation are Boesman and Lena's kith and kin. Barend, Koosie, Serge and Cappie, four hoboes, are essentially men without a future. There is a strong ontological link between Cappie and Boesman. Both stand beyond the pale of civilised life; they exist in a peripheral sense. With alcohol and the passage of time, it is conceivable that Cappie will end where Boesman begins. Five years separate the two plays, years in which Fugard's relentless self-analysis was painstakingly recorded in his Notebooks. There was constant personal growth and self-realisation, both clearly discernible in Boesman and Lena. From Cappie to Boesman is a psychological road Fugard travelled carrying his Jungian baggage. Fugard, drained by society and its problems, confronted the pain of his personal immolation. There is a strong autobiographical element in both Cappie and Boesman. What separates the two characters are areas of pain, deprivation and desperation. Cappie, his much vaunted military experience notwithstanding, is less complete as a human being. He requires a group identity, the puerile need to be part of a gang, to lose individual weakness and to gain collective strength. He cannot make it alone, as Boesman threatens to do. The military character of the gang enables Cappie to impose his authority,

perpetuating army cohesion and discipline in order to subdue his fellow hoboes. Their army-style hierarchy forms part of a game they consciously play. It is a deadly serious game with sinister implications for those who step out of line or break the rules. It is not the cathartic games Morris and Zach play in Blood Knot, enabling them to externalise fears and aggressions and to arrive at an equilibrium of sorts. It is a game played by weaklings, the derelicts and dregs of society, who need its ground rules to maintain their identity. Their reality is a harsh and unpalatable one--they are four hoboes living parasitically on their host, society. The game is their ultimate self-deception. The reluctance of Barend to subscribe to all aspects of their game is a potent factor in isolating and stigmatizing him, the deserter who betrays the group ethic; potentially the victim of their mindless group violence. The four characters are clearly differentiated. Cappie, their leader and interrogator, better educated than the others, has the strength and authority to sustain the military charade but needs to buttress his leadership position with military jargon. He deftly manipulates Serge, his aide-de-camp, neurotic and shell-shocked. Private Koosie, totally brainwashed, his compliance and participation assured, is the youngest of the quartet. Barend, the military misfit, the Afrikaner in conflict with their system, the player who not only breaks the rules of the game but refuses to play, stands apart, the loser within the group.

Cosmo Pieterse, writer and lecturer, draws attention to Fugard's commentary on war and its effects: "these shell-shocked, perverted, de-normalised men are what they are because of their make-up and their history, and their history includes

war."[7] Pieterse highlights a further allegorical meaning, as well as the play's relevance to the social situation in South Africa and the world, "in which life is existence, and existence is 'the occupation' of a derelict house, a one-time home now occupied only by tramps and desires and haunted by ghostly memories and fears."[8]

Fugard deals with the ravages of war in terms of its destructive bombardment of the human personality. The external narrative shows the inability of these men to survive without an authoritarian group ethic, with the possible exception of Barend. They are dropouts operating in their twilight world on the charitable fringes of society. Moving into a house still redolent with middle-class rectitude and relationships, brings their abject condition into sharp focus. Enemy aliens, their occupation of the house is an act of war, an invasion of territory to which they have no legitimate claim. It is a violation, a rape of respectability. To clarify and accentuate these themes, Fugard introduces a dove, symbolic of peace and love, the bird they capture and plan to kill. It is this senseless and wanton act of destruction that characterizes Cappie and his cohorts as life-threatening. They are no longer perceived as harmless vagrants. It is a measure of Fugard's art, humanity and compassion, that he can evaluate them, engage our sympathies for their lost potential and at the same time sound a warning on the damaging effects of militarism on the human psyche and the injurious consequences for society as a whole. Although Fugard does not sound an overtly prophetic note, the future looks bleak. If one views the play as an extended metaphor for life itself--the men representing the degenerate, heartless and exploitative present and the house an

image of past values, abused and crumbling--it is a psychological terrain of gloom and doom, relieved only by flashes of remembered decency too brief for salvation. As the playwright indicates in his introductory comments, the mood is one of dereliction. The neglected garden with its weed-choked path and the house "fallen into desuetude" (Occupation, p. 257) mirror human corruption. It is a physical and moral world in decline, slowly disintegrating and decomposing. Delineating the four vagrants illegally occupying the house enables Fugard to study the process of putrefaction, to focus on the rot, why it started, where it is leading and the cost to mankind and civilisation. Society is not guiltless. The pristine innocence of the nursery, the communication implicit in interleading bedrooms, the focal warmth of the fireplace, all features of dignified living, have been stripped of meaning and purpose.

There is a custodian, a nightwatchman, but his role is ineffectual, a token gesture of respect for past bourgeois stability. It is clear that the house has not only been neglected but slowly pillaged and vandalised. Rubbish, paper, dust, leaves, broken lengths of chain where the light used to be, ash and charred wood in the lounge, all indicate occasional occupants. The house, its former solidity scarred and threatened by a slow process of decay, is the tangible counterpart of its occupants, drifters severed from the mainstream of respectability and decency. The composite picture of humans and house suggests decay both physical and moral. Material renovation and spiritual redemption are issues untouched upon. The full force of camera scrutiny falls on the areas of breakdown and not on those of repair. Fugard as

dramatist is not positing a solution. In this play he is the acute observer, not the social worker alleviating mankind's scourges. He diagnoses the condition but offers no remedy. He is the playwright/historian chronicling human weakness and failure with specifics so indispensible to his craft. In depicting with intimacy and accuracy the traits of his four characters Fugard asks questions, postulates some answers but formulates no solutions. It is a hard-headed, unrelenting and at times painful examination of a present so debased that there can be no future, a concept underlined with Fugardian intensity:

> Cappie: Look at it! In rooms like this men ... men dream! You dream! The generations to come ... in the lovely old house that Jack built.
> Barend: I'm hungry....
> Cappie: Or the future. That's their word. The Future! They sat ... (Occupation, p. 265).

As tramps, trespassers and defilers, they have forfeited their right to a future. The future belongs to other men, it is not theirs. Barend resents this and Cappie, sensing his jealousy, uses this knowledge to control and manipulate him. With persistence and precision he uncovers the hidden secrets of Barend's heart, unravelling its mysteries. The tensions and conflicts are those of deranged men, prey to hallucinatory images. Past history and present debauchery combine to blur their perception of reality. They panic at the slightest provocation and are continually on the defensive, filled with fear and hatred. In a sense they are wounded soldiers, mentally battle-scarred from life's contests. In a crisis--the arrival of the night-watchman--the fight or flight syndrome manifests itself: Koosie scampers away, Barend is defensive, Serge breaks down and Cappie remains in detached

control. They know they do not belong, that their occupation is temporary, that they can be evicted. They are conscious of their alienation from society; the ghosts of residents dimly arouse their recollections of past decency and family connections.

The graffiti incidents in the play, distanced from each other, throw light on these attitudes. When Serge draws a heart with an arrow through it on a dusty window pane, it is an innocent gesture, leaving his mark however tentatively in the house, a faint anonymous autograph. Barend's obscene and insulting graffiti express his hatred of those social values exemplified by the house. He reviles that which he superficially abhors but to which he is drawn irresistibly. Cappie, with that degree of insightful analysis and observation one expects from Fugard's alter-ego characters, comments:

> Can you still smell a home in here, Barend? You're keen, man. I missed it. Yes, we're pissing all over the memory of a happy home. We're not even trespassers. We're defilers. And you're jealous (Occupation, p. 280).

His is a profound truth. Despised, an outcast of society, Barend's obscenity is the calligraphic counterpart of Serge's scream, albeit a silent one. He has turned his back on what he still values subconsciously. His angry scrawl is an act of venomous aggression, insulting those by whose measure he feels inadequate. His obscenities are the curses of an inarticulate man; the writing on the wall his warning and threat of alien and hostile forces.

Barend, Koosie, Serge and Cappie inhabit a cold and comfortless world. The military structure which gives their group a semblance of cohesion, is fragile and easily shattered. Far from protecting and sheltering them the house acts as a

catalyst, exposing their raw nerves, their dissipation and repressed emotions. The house is a potent image of abandonment, as empty and full of ghosts as are their lives. The prognosis is a bad one: "At the end of it all--ruins. Man is a builder of ruins" (Occupation, p. 286), states Cappie in an eloquent soliloquy that reveals his disillusionment with life and pinpoints the reason for his defection from the ranks of sober citizens. Empty slogans, brainwashing and senseless destruction all took their toll. "The guns have left our hearts in ruins," he states simply (Occupation, p. 287). The framework of fantasy, sustaining the military myths, enables him to keep together the fragments of a shattered personality. His hostility to Barend stems from his mistrust of a man not entirely dissolute, a man with angry hopes of employment and faded dreams of home. The house represents more to Barend than to the others for whom it is a transient roof over their heads. Barend stakes his claim and territory, a bed in a room. "This is my room. My bed. Mine!" he shouts in short, emphatic phrases (Occupation, p. 291). His ill-defined and obscure longings negate his allegiance to the group. He is in a no-man's-land, the occupant of an empty house, neither an accredited member of the hobo corps nor a respectable citizen. It is Barend's moment of self-assertion that prompts a racialistic outburst from Cappie: "You've got a nigger's bed, Dutchman" (Occupation, p. 291). This is probably not intended as a revelation of apartheid society bedevilled by rifts and prejudice but rather as a glimpse of the great divide separating these men from the main body of society. Cappie senses Barend's wavering affiliation to the group and hates him for it. He perceives that Barend has not irrevocably compromised

himself, that he might still salvage his life and devise a future. The house filled with half-remembered ghosts has catalysed Barend's ambivalent feelings into an as yet ill-defined need to plan a future, his last words being "It's late! Tomorrow ...? (Occupation, p. 293).

From detailed visual and aural analysis and preoccupation with the four men, the camera finally moves back until the whole house once more comes into view, containing the human drama that erupted within its walls. It is no longer an empty house shielding derelicts from their shame and society's wrath. Fugard has given his hoboes names, identities and histories. Through them the playwright indicts warfare that ravages men's bodies and minds. The play is a penetrating study of flawed humanity, Fugard's palette colouring the canvas in stark tones. It has a strong design, a visual focal point, a house and four occupants, a framework within which men are tried, tested and found wanting. But Fugard never denies their humanity. To society they are bums, loafers, good-for-nothings. To Fugard they are life's step-children. Their invasion of the house is a return of sorts, a homecoming in the spirit of Robert Lowell's poem, Returning:[9]

> Homecoming to the sheltered little resort,
> where the members of my gang
> are bald-headed, in business,
> and the dogs still know me by my smell ...
> It's rather a dead town
> after my twenty years' mirage.[10]

Mille Miglia

Despite Fugard's belief that television could never have the potential of the stage for actor and audience, "the reality

of the living moment, the transience of its communication,"[11] he wrote Mille Miglia in 1967, re-examining and reworking it the following year for Robin Midgley, the BBC producer.[12]

In 1967 and 1968 he wrote Boesman and Lena and his Notebooks teem with comment on the genesis and creation of Boesman, the gut-wrenching accuracy of its social realities, yet there are scant references to Mille Miglia, a television script out of the Fugard mould, a play neglected in Denis Walder's critical evaluation of Athol Fugard.

When the play was screened on BBC2 it was generally regarded as the experience of the week.[13] What diminished its impact was the subsequent chat show with Stirling Moss and Denis Jenkinson, the driver and working passenger in the play, who dismissed it as "bad fiction." Embarrassed by Fugard's depiction of their relationship as neurotic, intense and acrimonious, they maintained it had been cordial. They panned the play as a self-indulgent travesty of the facts. Tom Stoppard stated that Fugard got to a deeper truth than Moss or Jenkinson might admit to. He confirmed the BBC blurb that Fugard "has great insight into people and a special talent for being able to write about them truthfully."[14]

Although the thematic material is light years away from the South African ethos of which he is an eloquent exponent, Fugard nonetheless deals with the world of human nature, men and their machines, the pseudo-scientific myths of the twentieth century. It is a world where fantasy meshes with reality, where men's dreams of excellence dictate their exploits and achievements. As the script and camera move through space and time, Fugard presents precisely the nerve-wracking application of two men dedicated to winning a

dangerous road race. It is, however, Fugard's play, and as literary and creative agent he uses poetic licence. The result might represent to Moss and Jenkinson distortion of historical "truth," but for the viewer this issue is not of paramount significance.

Mille Miglia is not a documentary drama, a re-play of newsreels, but rather a well-constructed and honest investigation of man's ruthless bid to be the best and rewrite the records. It presents the frenetic surface preparations and, at the same time, probes painfully beneath that meretricious veneer to the philosophical raison d'etre of it all:

> 'Round and 'round. This lump of mud and rock, or whatever it is we're living on, is turning at a good thousand miles an hour or so. That's what governs us. If you don't keep moving ... you're dead.[15]

Paradoxically, Moss equates speed with peace in lines that come poetically close in meaning to T. S. Eliot's "the still point of a turning world."[16] He confides to Jenkinson:

> But it's true, like a gramophone record, the nearer you get to the centre, the slower the thing is moving. Maybe right at the centre nothing is moving at all. The nearest I'll ever get to real peace is when I'm driving very fast (Mille Miglia, p. 76).

At the same time Fugard depicts the physical intoxication that speed induces, the addictive fix of motoring professionals. Intellectual analysis is at the core of the play, giving it substance. It is always more than an audio-visual reflection of frenzied preparations for one of the world's toughest races. Yet Fugard's capacity to sketch in specifics, his obsessive attention to a bewildering range of details and his convincing text of signs, sounds and signals build a realistic and utterly believable world.

The language is colloquial, true to the motoring idiom.

When a literary style emerges, it is authentic and motivated. Jenkinson is a journalist, a skilled manipulator of words and meanings. His ability to articulate concepts and feelings is naturally superior to that of Moss, essentially a man of action. Indeed, Moss concerns himself primarily with function rather than feelings, using specialised motoring terminology, a car jargon pruned at times to signals. It is a vocabulary so technical and sparse, so devoid of emotive nuances and overtones, that it dehumanizes the protagonists. They momentarily become extensions of the gleaming Mercedes Benz 300 SLR, the focal point of their efforts and aspirations. It is mechanical aspects of their training schedules that dominate; the harsh discipline of matching their skills to the perfection of the machine lends poignancy and effective contrast to human outbursts when they occur. Technical excellence and infallibility are components in a composite study of ambition relentlessly pursuing goals attainable only through super-human exertion. Human traits and frailty are ruthlessly ignored, suppressed or excised, a procedure executed with relative ease by Moss and with difficulty by Jenkinson.

The conflict situation between the two men is an arena of dramatic potential for a playwright of Fugard's sensitivity and he exploits it fully. Their differences are exacerbated by their close, even intimate, contact over a lengthy period of time, sharing a cramped working area by day and the same room at night. There is an uneasy ebb and flow to any cordiality, diminished by mutual tension and Moss' aggression. The men are well differentiated and characterised.

Function in this instance dictates form, Moss is undeniably the driver, the powerhouse of concentration and

motivation, aggressively setting his sights on record-breaking times. Jenkinson is in every sense the passenger and he knows it. There is hesitancy and dependency in his manner, a deference to superior knowledge and experience. As a motoring correspondent he may have knowledge of the track and all that goes with it, but not from the inside. It is precisely the inner realms, the sensations not the statistics that he is now subjected to, as well as Moss' ill-concealed impatience that verges on abuse:

> Can't you get it through your thick skull that there's no race worth thinking about until we get it right. It's a test! And we're failing it. (Pause) I was faster on my own (Mille Miglia, p. 27).

Moss, conditioned by speed and the race, is in a world of his own, clearly intolerant of those who have not "learnt to think and react at 180 miles an hour" (Mille Miglia, p. 28). Jenkinson, tried and tested by the sustained, abnormal and punishing routine, flares into defiance that exacerbates the growing rift between the two men. Moss responds with suppressed vehemence and their inter-personal conflict is crudely exposed, precipitating Jenkinson's revolt. "Who do you think you are? God? What the hell. It doesn't matter," he cries (Mille Miglia, p. 32).

In Fugard's hands, however, it does matter, as does every nuance of / their partnership that threatens to flounder in shallow passions, but ultimately they close ranks to attain their tormenting goal. We follow every strained minute and metre of their route, sharing doubts, confidences, beliefs and fears. Skillfully, Fugard shows the binding force of a common goal enveloping the men, toughening their skins and souls. To all intents and purposes they are machines.

"Tomorrow has to, and will be perfect.... The weather, the car, you ... and maybe me. It's a rarified atmosphere," says Jenkinson (Mille Miglia, p. 64). His entry into that atmosphere and his subsequent adaptations, his weaknesses and Moss' strengths, their flaws and mutual humanity, combine in a saga of our time, a century preoccupied with record breakers and title holders. Within a claustrophobic car and the confines of a hotel room, Fugard examines an archetypal dramatic situation. Given as he is to two-handers of psychological intensity, Fugard's Mille Miglia exhibits typical trademarks. It is an effective variation on his theme but without the searing political overtones that characterize the interaction of Zach and Morris in Blood Knot, or the sociological implications that formed a sub-text in the dialogue of Johnnie and Hester in Hello and Goodbye, or the male/female conflict in Boesman and Lena.

As elsewhere there is a dramatic reduction of action, the ruthless exclusion of extraneous detail and superfluous personalities, to focus on two characters in circumscribed physical and emotional territory. The mechanics and Neubauer, the team manager, represent external factors, the former giving credibility to "faction" presentation of an historical event, and the latter conveying the industrial entrepreneurial interests so central to the highly commercialised world of motor racing. Other peripheral characters, as in all Fugard's plays, widen the physical and emotional geography of the play: the priest, introduced early in the play, and the waiter in the final sequences, show the broad range of popular enthusiasm for the Mille Miglia that has fired a nation's imagination, obsessive interest permeating all levels of society. The priest's story of Tazio Nuvolari, termed the

greatest racing driver of all time by Jenkinson, and his disastrous Mille Miglia of 1947, sounds a warning note of mortality, as well as creating appreciation of the hazards that destroyed former participants. It elevates the race to a contest of a different kind, man pitting his strength against seemingly invincible forces, man's subconscious death wish cloaked in ambition. The priest's brief narrative is a reminder of the devastating toll of man and machine that occurred in the past and might conceivably happen again, a note of foreboding confirmed at the end of the play in a short coda:

> On May the first, 1955, Sterling Moss with Denis Jenkinson as his passenger and navigator, won the one thousand mile Mille Miglia ... the first English driver ever to do so. Their total time for the course was ten hours, seven minutes and forty-eight seconds ... an average speed of 97.8 miles an hour. This was a new record for the Mille Miglia and will stand for all time. The race was abandoned two years later as being too dangerous (Mille Miglia p. 82).

The priest's anecdote is also the play's first foray into the realm of motoring psychology, a condensed case history pared of non-essentials yet poignant and touching. Together with Fugard's painfully detailed observations, it constitutes valid empirical research into competitors' psyches. Fugard's play achieves far more than "faction," the blend of fact and fiction, a term Stephen Gray applies to Mille Miglia.[17] Fugard may have aimed for documentary realism, but his play is never a straightforward and accurate reconstruction of historical events. The play owes more to Fugard's creative imagination that to the record of what actually happened and we see this in the brief yet apposite vignette involving the priest, Moss and Jenkinson. It delineates sparsely yet strongly the compulsion to win at all costs, the egotistical

reliance on prestige, the deadly seriousness of the pursuit, and the fearlessness of men engaged in death-defying exploits, as well as the popular canonisation of past motoring heroes, all of which adds status to the race and stature to the participants. We are left in no doubt that this is a trial of men and machines of the most challenging order, straining civilized manners and mores to the limit, sowing seeds of dissension and discontent, and warping personalities subjected to stress.

Moss' impatience and anger might alienate Jenkinson and damage the fabric of friendship, but the working relationship, their racing partnership, is strengthened as they progress towards their goal, their initial conflicts resolved. Moss, the professional, knows the price one pays for total absorption in and dedication to a project that takes them beyond established frontiers. It is Jenkinson, the dilettante, whose initiation into this harsh and demanding world is a painful process of self-realisation. Despite ruthless singleness of purpose and consequent destruction of individuality, they bond professionally into a team totally reliant on mutual trust, the positive, constructive element in an otherwise tortuous progression towards victory. Moss and Jenkinson are moulded into a working unit, conditioned automata, exponents of a system that propels them forward, setting new standards for mankind. At no stage in the play is the viewer tempted to say "so what?" The objectives never appear other than worthy. The men are projected as pioneers, with the physical and mental strength of explorers, trailblazers, showing the way.

Of the two, Moss is the visionary aiming for perfection, just as Miss Helen in Mecca reveals the same capacity to

isolate herself from the world in order to pursue her artistic goals. But whereas Miss Helen's philosophy estranges her from her peers, Moss is sustained by a supportive infra-structure and ultimately assured of acclaim and an entry in the record books. Whether Fugard is concerned with a driver steering a machine, or an artist creating sculptures, he focuses on personalities with obsessive visions, hurtling towards their personal destinies, discounting the human cost and highlighting the passion and urgency of their compulsions. Whether Miss Helen cocoons herself within her house or whether Moss secludes himself in his car, they are lone and lonely explorers charting and illuminating new territory, pushing aside the darkness of preconceived ideas. It is significant that Moss, who consciously ignores the spectre of death, fears blindness: "I was really frightened that I had done something to my eyes," he confides to Jenkinson (Mille Miglia, p. 39). Obviously there are no sightless drivers and one can validly interpret his fear at this primary level. But motifs of light and darkness consistently signify more than this in Fugard's plays. Moss sees not only the road ahead but the goals towards which he strives. Blindness and by implication the powers of darkness would obscure that vision.

Repeatedly in the corpus of his dramatic work, Fugard delineates men and women who are isolated and set apart, their microcosmic world a mirror of the wider world. In his later plays Fugard shapes and refines this experience, taking it to its ultimate expression in his study of Dimetos, a man with his face set against society, the monastic recluse; and Miss Helen, withdrawing in like manner from the irrelevancies and petty concerns of her milieu to foster artistic and spiritual

growth. Moss is an early milestone along that road of self-discovery and self-fulfilment, a man linked in spirit, motivation and outlook to these later creations of Fugard. It is fertile terrain for a dramatist, characters removed from the common throng, set apart from the mainstream of ordinary aspirations, thoughts and feelings. As Moss observes, "Racing cars are not happiness machines" (Mille Miglia, p. 40), the road of achievement is long and hard. In his case it requires thoroughness, precision, practice and attention to detail, a military campaign to rout the enemy of failure. All tactics are exploited to ensure concert pitch, including rehearsals in chairs with the roller of observations to programme their signals and responses. It is a play within a play, a rehearsal of the reality, a game in the spirit of Fugard's play-acting games but enacted this time with deadly seriousness compared to the relative frivolity of the motoring game of Zach and Morris in Blood Knot, a game nostalgically evocative of childhood and the past.

Moss and Jenkinson's rehearsal lasts ten minutes. In chairs they give a "heightened sensation of speed," Jenkinson turning the roller and signalling while Moss calls out loudly and urgently (Mille Miglia, p. 44), a sequence that prompted Tom Stoppard to observe: "there was a moment ... that made one's toes curl."[18] These armchair rehearsals are exhausting for both participants and viewers but convey the theoretical system that complemented the practical expertise. Their decision to push the car to a control point in the event of mechanical failure is really a resolve to push themselves to the limit. Both recognize that no amount of play-acting can rival the reality, the crack at the target.

In professional terms Moss is a man of action and Jenkinson a man of words. It is an uneasy partnership, with distinguishing elements common to most Fugardian bonds: alienation, intense and mutual need, and desire for acceptance and trust. For Moss, trust is a prerequisite to success. As Neubauer points out at the beginning of the play: "You will have to trust each other" (Mille Miglia, p. 10). Despite the abrasive manner of Moss, who proves a harsh taskmaster, trust does build up between the two men. It is comparable to the loyalty and camaraderie of men at war; in many ways they are comrades-in-arms, fighting a battle that will propel them to victory and new frontiers. It is recognition of this emotional interaction, a spontaneous but not unpredictable by-product of their discordant relationship, that prompts Moss to acknowledge on returning from a solo trip on the track: "It didn't feel the same. I mean the SLR has got two seats. I missed you boy" (Mille Miglia, p. 58). The application and concentration might be ruthless but they are ultimately the attitudes of men not machines, men unable to totally excise human feelings of intolerance (Moss), resentment (Jenkinson) and attachment (both). Despite the total absorption in and commitment to their goal, they are human beings, their performance affected by tension, trust, mistrust, respect, derision and encouragement.

The two men, representing as they do a polarity of interests, the academic and the mechanical, merge to form an indomitable team enriched by osmotic interaction. Jenkinson subjects himself to the physical rigours of the road and race; and Moss formulates thoughts and confronts emotions lurking beneath the macho surface and never revealed in the

cold collection of facts he records meticulously in his diary. In their team effort, their strengths fuse and their weaknesses recede. The night before the big race, poised to attack their target, they momentarily relax, letting down their guard, Moss conceding that without Jenkinson he could not win and Jenkinson acknowledging his passive role as observer/navigator. It is a moment of honesty between two psychologically scarred combatants. This is their moment of truth, with preparations and practice behind them, the race before them. It is a still moment of quietude, reflection, analysis and waiting, a time the playwright exploits dramatically to fill in the picture, to sketch in missing details, to heighten awareness of the situation and the protagonists. It is the appropriate moment for confessional confidences exchanged between men who do not censure but condone. They accept each other. In colloquial idiom, Moss verbalizes his attitudes, a personal philosophy that extols professional circuits as an exemplary lifestyle, unrivalled in terms of meaning and commitment:

> All I've got I'm going to bring to the moment and its decision. I'm not frightened of consequences. It should be possible to live that way--flat out--where the choices and decisions really matter--all the time. Maybe I'd give up racing if I knew how to live like that. But I don't (Mille Miglia, p. 80).

Through Moss, Fugard articulates a dramatic verity: Life is waiting, preparation for a race, a test, an event of great magnitude. It requires mental strength to focus on goals and to press forward towards fulfilment at all costs. It is a temperament and outlook closely allied to that of the dreamer, focusing on distant and desirable realities. In Mille Miglia we see the attainment of targets, the rigours of a road that is at the same time one of life's paths, the exacting standards

demanded of its devotees and the destructive inroads on minds and hearts. In lesser hands the play might have been a narrative and chronological exposition of dates, times, names and places, dominated by physical action. Fugard has infused the material with deeper content, defining the implications of certain actions and promoting awareness of consequences. There is insight and understanding not only of men harnessing resources, mental, physical and mechanical, to attain an end, but also a statement in simple and dramatically relevant terms of truths as valid for the viewer as for the protagonists.

Finally, one has to assess a script's entertainment value. As television theatre it works well, as Tom Stoppard testified in his critique. Written with technical virtuosity, it requires a bravura performance from the cast to translate signals and sounds into a valid theatrical language. Well researched, with Fugardian specifics that give authenticity and a strong regional feeling to the dialogue, peppered with place names, milestones and landmarks, it nonetheless is so much more than the sum total of its separate elements. Its impact is not dependent on literary style or poetic imagery of which there is very little; it results from the overall concept and shape, the mass of physical details barely covering planes of emotional responses and mental analysis. The multi-layered effect achieves a textural richness that ensures riveting viewing.

Originally screened on 5th August 1968 on BBC's Theatre 625, on 18th July 1973 an adaptation of Mille Miglia, "Drivers," by David Muir, opened for four weeks at Cape Town's Outer Space, with Bill Curry and Bill Flynn rehearsing a motor rally with a polystyrene racing model. It was fortunate for

Fugard that his play was commissioned at a time when the BBC fostered the production of original and memorable plays. Sydney Newman created a separate plays department, underlining the importance of the single play. Later sponsors and network executives decided that what the public wanted was not social realism but entertaining escapism. And the public got it in an unbroken line from Cheyenne to Dynasty, when American "cultural imperialism" dominated the world's screens, stunting the growth of indigenous drama.

The last ten years, as Francis Wheen points out, have seen the growth of the blockbuster mini-series and most TV drama appears to have lost touch with real life.[19] It is precisely this virtue that Mille Miglia exemplifies. Fugard puts his finger on the pulse of each character and keeps it there. He monitors but never manipulates--his people have a will and life all their own. Seen within the context of television viewing at the time, Mille Miglia represented a welcome departure from the "Anyone for Tennis" drawing room situation. It stands today as a text worthy of examination and presentation.

The Guest

With the exception of his play "Master Harold"..and the boys, which is openly confessional, Fugard's plays present incidents in his life in artistic disguise. As Mel Gussow pointed out, to the outsider Fugard's plays may seem unrelated to his personal life, but each of them has "a specific root" in his life.[20]

It is a realm for speculation whether Fugard's fascination with the life, times and work of Eugène Marais stemmed from

commonality of interests, temperaments and addictive tendencies. Marais was a poet and drug addict and Fugard a self-confessed alcoholic, until he stopped drinking towards the end of 1982. Fugard was drawn to Marais's poetry, to his work as an innovative naturalist and, irresistibly, to the dark parallel of himself. "There is the addictive nature in my personality. I am not known for my self-restraint ... I am an alcoholic," he stated in an interview.[21]

In the disturbing film, The Guest, directed in 1976 by Ross Devenish, Fugard cast himself as Marais and the identification between these two sons of South Africa, so similar in literary attributes and psychological traits, became even closer. The film represents a fusion of personae so that it is difficult to state where Marais ends and Fugard begins. "In playing the part, I processed myself," Fugard stated.[22] In playing Marais, he was in effect playing himself.

With The Guest, based on an episode in Marais's life, Fugard and Devenish broke new ground. Despite poor box office receipts, the film was a landmark, attempting to explore an unusual personality. It can be viewed on different levels, as a straightforward drama of a man's battle to de-toxify his body and mind, to rid himself of morphine addiction; and as a complex probe into diametrically opposed cultural values.

Fugard was drawn to his subject by a close sense of identification with the dark side of their addictive natures, as well as by appreciation for Marais's intellectual stature and artistry. The film script constitutes a human yet honest portrait of the man and encompasses his life and work comprehensively within 70 pages, an effective condensation of thought, observation and scientific writings

achieved through Fugard's defining and refining selection process. The Guest, although based on one episode in Leon Rousseau's authoritative biography, Die Groot Verlange (translated into English, The Golden Stream), nonetheless conveys through quotations the full range of this gifted man, journalist, poet, medical student, advocate, and naturalist; once referred to as a community not an individual. It is this multiplicity of gifts, so expertly conveyed in The Guest, that makes the script a model of intelligent condensation.

Admittedly Fugard has selected a crucial episode, a moment of external quietude in an otherwise frenetically active life, a moment given to reflection and, more importantly, to hallucination. For it is through drug-induced euphoria that Fugard deftly fills in the canvas, flashback techniques covering a vast range of subjects closely investigated by Marais.

Fugard started working on the script in September 1975. In October and November Fugard was preoccupied with his subject, but in December the film Fugard and Devenish wanted to make on Marais was delayed for lack of funds. Six months later he and Ross finalised the script and within seven weeks the filming was completed on the Highveld, "that dormant, waiting, wide landscape, harbouring its small and secret life."[23] Fugard found his role as Marais demanding and challenging, terming it "an important experience." The spirit of Marais's poetry provided a poignant commentary on the violence and destruction in Soweto at that time. For a man of Fugard's sensitivity, total immersion in the persona of Marais, shaving his beard and trimming his hair to resemble as closely as possible the clean-shaven poet, constituted an encounter with the dark and most disturbing side of his nature, a retreat into "the psy-

chopathology of the isolated consciousness," man's preoccupation with himself and the meaning of life.[24]

Marais was never just a case history of a drug addict. Yet his dependence on morphine was the darkness clouding an otherwise rare spirit. Unlike alcohol, a disinhibiting drug and, in Fugard's own personal experience, a cathartic agent releasing creativity, morphine is a powerful sedative, suppressing feelings of hostility and anger and generally retarding the creative process. Morphine does not generate hallucinations but induces a subjective sense of well-being, clinically referred to by psychiatrists as "The Nod."[25] An inadvertent overdose, however, might result in the development of a confusional state, visual hallucinations stemming from an overloaded brain./ Clinically, Fugard's own alcohol dependency was light years away from Marais's morphine addiction. Yet it enabled him to fathom Marais's addictive personality, to understand his introspective, inward-looking soul-searching, his alienation from the world around him.

Drug abusers form clinging relationships. In many instances, however, the dependency is hostile and aggressive. There is resentment of those on whom they perforce lean. Fugard delineates these features and characteristics with accuracy and honesty, at the same time portraying the horrifying reality of a drug experience that dominates Marais's stay at Steenkampskraal. We see the dreary, relaxed condition following a morphine injection; the opposite effect of agitation, frustration and suicidal tendencies induced by drug abstinence. It is not the death knell of creativity but a disruption of human bonding. The drug experience dominates,

demanding and obtaining the full involvement of the addict. As a result, substance abusers of any kind have few relationships. Their primary concern is their drug supply. As delineated in The Guest, Marais was a poor candidate for therapy. His motivation, never firmly established beyond his agreement to spend time at Steenkampskraal, is easily eroded by the horror of withdrawal symptoms. Predictably, he fails to comply with the expectations of his doctor or those of his host. Depressive traits in his nature are exposed. This is the mental anguish and physical torment Fugard depicts with the sympathy of a fellow artist similarly enslaved by addictive tendencies. It is an identification of interests, spirit and flesh, that strengthens this bleak yet brilliant portrait of homo sapiens and homo patiens. It is, above all, an exposition on pain, a central tenet of Marais's philosphy, the pivot on which his world revolves, the personal pain and suffering Marais as a naturalist observed, noted and recorded in his Soul of the Ape. In selecting the Steenkampskraal episode in the life of Marais, Fugard was able to draw together the totality of the man's existence, to assess his past work as naturalist/philosopher/poet and to predicate the gathering gloom enshrouding Marais, a gifted man ruined and ravaged by morphine addiction. The complexity of this character, the dilemma of a drug addict in a disapproving and censorious society, the debilitating effects of morphine on the human personality, the consequent degradation of the body and the decay of the mind are forcefully captured and conveyed. Fugard's situation and experience propelled him towards Marais as a dramatic subject and equipped him to define traits of character and trends of rehabilitation with the confidence of one who has been there and knows what it

is all about. Multiple factors contributed to this close identification between author and subject, including the hybrid family background of both men in which English not only vied with Afrikaans as a cultural milieu but dominated, as well as the facility both men discovered in expressing their literary personae in English.

Alcohol helped Fugard reach into his dark side in plays such as Master Harold just as Marais's use of morphine promoted a pessimistic, dark world view. Undeniably, the inner torment of Fugard and Marais fed the creative spirit. Samuel G. Freedman, wrote of the "mad artist" who attracted and repelled, the self-destructive artist inviting futility or death. Freedman makes the point that it is the tormented artist and not the untroubled one who provides the stuff of tabloid notoriety and romantic embellishment.[26] But if that image is inflated, neither is it groundless. For many artists, Freedman alleges, creation is a constant act of balancing the dark side that allows introspection with the brighter one that turns raw material into finished product. Dr Barry M. Panter, associate professor of psychiatry at the University of Southern California, cites a chemistry between the primitive levels of the inner lives of artists and their creativity. The artist stays in touch with primitive drives on the fine line between sanity and madness.[27] Yet it remains largely an individual matter how an artist handles such powerful forces or fails to. For a playwright like Athol Fugard, one of the hardest parts of abstinence was giving up the liberating effect of liquor. "When I was writing a play," said Fugard, "I would start drinking after sunset and then fairly steadily into the night. And that last carafe of wine at night--that spell of wildness--

was when I would set up the ideas that I'd work on soberly the next day."[28] Viewed in the context of Marais's philosophy, it is significant that Fugard started his drinking at sunset, the advent of Hesperian depression in man. The prospect of writing without alcohol terrified Fugard. Could he still put his dark side forward without the aid of a drug? Nothing he did could replace alcohol. Prophetically, he commented: "Maybe my art now will be more about light than dark."[29] Fugard's comments on the motif of darkness, so prevalent in his earlier plays is apt when one considers the metaphor of light that illuminates Mecca, the play written in a period of total abstinence and sobriety. Recently Fugard recanted his earlier belief that alcohol enabled the artist to function creatively, a concept he now terms "the dangerous myth." In an interview, he stated:

> I think any alcoholic ends up with something of a missionary zeal to get the word out. I think there are a set of unbelievably dangerous myths about alcohol and the artist that need dispelling.... I believed the stillness between this dark side and the light side was necessary--that it fed my daimon, that without the dark, morbid energy that drinking gave, the liberation ... I couldn't write.[30]

There were similarities of background and temperament between Marais and Fugard such as invalid fathers, journalistic stints, and ambivalent feelings towards their own people. In addition, Marais made his contributions to Afrikaans when poetry was in its infancy, with little literary tradition in the language. Fugard's contribution to South African drama was also that of the pioneer and innovator. Both men stood in comparable positions vis a vis their artistry and the cultural mainstream of their time. In confronting Marais, his desperation and destiny, Fugard embarked on a voyage of self-discovery and self-confrontation, richly chronicled in the

script.

Viewed in this light, the criticism of J. M. Coetzee that this episode in the life of Marais "leads from nowhere to nowhere"[31] is unacceptable. It is a central episode that draws together the tragic elements in the life and times of a man endowed with great intellect, a spirit of scientific enquiry and poetic vision. The episode itself and the characters brought within its orbit constitute a microcosmic view of South African Afrikaner society. Aside from Marais, there is his friend, mentor, guide and therapist, A. G. Visser, who brings him to Steenkampskraal. As doctor and poet, he exemplifies the union of science and art, without the rot that threatens the fabric of Marais's life and work. A man of decency, concerned with Marais's welfare, and sincere in his attempt to wean him from morphine, it is the paradox of their friendship that his caring involves pain for Marais, torment inflicted then and later by a series of well-intentioned friends, community guardians upholding norms of decency that finally pushed Marais to the limits of endurance and beyond. The charisma of Marais, a blend of personal charm, intellectual independence and spiritual depth, drew men and women to him throughout his life. He compelled their admiration and reprobation. Their conventional attitudes differed radically from his and the Afrikaner evangelising compulsion to save him body and soul was a potent factor in his final self-destruction. At Steenkampskraal, interaction was a prerequisite of his stay: there were two young men in his bedroom at night, there was dialogue with Tant Corrie, arguments with Oom Doors, the beginnings of friendship with Little Corrie and the weekly visits of Dr Visser. Yet Steenkampskraal was a forerunner of incarceration

on another farm at a later time, Pelindaba, the farm of G. Preller and his wife, Hansie, where a destitute Marais experiencing acute withdrawal symptoms and denied the solace of alcohol, took his own life. From Steenkampskraal down the slippery slope to Pelindaba--a Zulu word meaning "no more dialogue," peculiarly apt at this ebb-tide in Marais's life and fortunes--from respected writer to outcast recidivist, all this is foreshadowed in The Guest. One should, however, guard against precipitate or harsh judgements. The Prellers had played a prolonged supportive role for many years. Immersed in arranging their homestead, there was little time for Marais. Mrs Preller, less cordially disposed to Marais, clearly had little sympathy for his addiction. What separates Steenkampskraal from Pelindaba is human compassion, the presence of someone who relents, who takes him back, who acknowledges the failure of society to reclaim its errant son yet condones the situation.

There is no Dr Visser, no sympathetic therapist at Pelindaba. One can also legitimately advance Marais's own theory that pain is the price paid for life itself, the intensity of birthpangs proportionate to the depth of mother love, the price paid for caring and loving. J. M. Coetzee viewed this pain as the burden of white consciousness in Africa. To take Marais seriously meant to take him seriously as a "hero of consciousness."[32]

As with nearly all Fugard's work, it is a specifically South African story rooted in a particular region where names resonate meaning beyond the confines of place, as has been noted in the case of Pelindaba, which accurately reflected the end of the road, the cessation of human inter-dependence for

Marais. "His vision was essentially one which was produced in an interaction with Africa, and we wanted very much to make a film that had its roots here, in the country in which it would be made," Fugard and Devenish stated.[33] There is, too, a hard flint-like sound to Steenkampskraal, a quality reflected in the family resident there, whose minds were shaped in response to harsh conditions in their history and environment. As Devenish points out, however, the story is not an external one alone but equally Marais's exploration of his psyche, "his attempt to relate to his inner world."[34]

The collaboration between Athol Fugard and Ross Devenish in devising the script was a close one and is generally not stressed in the critical literature. Sheila Roberts makes no mention of Ross Devenish[35] and other critics and commentators err similarly. Yet Devenish, whose name appears with Fugard's as the joint author of the screenplay, contributed much to the construction of characters, imaginative interpretation as well as technical and cinematic considerations. Devenish played a creative role in the development of the screenplay and, of course, he directed its translation into film. Nonetheless, these were Fugard's myths and monsters, the nightmares and dreams of his own psyche. And in the quality of the writing, with the dense poetry so characteristic of Statements After An Arrest Under The Immorality Act and Dimetos, we discern Fugard's artistic individuality. Fugard respected and trusted Devenish, believing in his ability to capture the spirit of his work.

The text, eloquent and explicit, vibrates with literary references relevant to the central figure. Fugard's mind is steeped in primary sources. The first line of the screenplay:

"Highveld winter landscape. Wide and empty,"[36] while clearly a visual directive, reflects the opening stanza of Marais's "Winternag":

> O Koud is die windjie
> en skraal,
> En blink in die dof-lig
> en kaal,
> So wyd as die Heer se genade,
> lê die velde in sterlig en skade.[37]

Marais's vision of the veld, both "wyd" and "kaal" becomes Fugard's landscape "wide and empty;" with ironic overtones, for there is little mercy awaiting Marais in that empty veld, an irony evident in the poem as well. It is empty in an emotional sense, bare of comfort. His is a withdrawal not only from sources of supply, but from intellectual society into an archetypal Boer family circle, which mirrors the pain their nation endured in British concentration camps, their resolute Calvinist faith and the simplicity of people close to the soil. From their perspective, they encounter a member of the intelligentsia, a man with a title, Advocate, whose reputation compels respect.[38] Initially a meeting and later a confrontation of wills, both sides change perceptibly, both are tested in different ways. It is a measure of Fugard's dramatic dexterity that the sympathy of the viewer is engaged over a wide canvas. The focus of the script centres on Marais, his anguished dilemma and recuperative pain, but beyond this is an umbral zone of interaction between Marais and the family and beyond that again a penumbral area of change within the family itself. The pinioned prisoner in his room struggling to adjust to a changed chemical, physical and intellectual situation is compelled to interact with his hosts/gaolers, who physically are the antithesis of Marais, unkempt, pale and gaunt.

Spiritually their belief contrasts with his agnosticism and their resilience is a silent reproach to his dark pessimism. Despite their sincere hospitality and cordiality, the scene is set for potential conflict. Although drawn from Afrikaner stock, Marais diverged radically from the family. In a stressful situation and with his declining self-control, the chasm will widen perceptibly.

From the opening sequence the geography of the film suggests in visual terms Marais's retreat from the world. The car winds through the veld, he is in transit but still free. In the grounds of Steenkampskraal he is welcomed with warmth and respect; he proceeds through the farmhouse, where his interaction with the family generally takes place and finally arrives in his room/cell. There is physical and emotional movement, a powerful initial thrust away from freedom towards voluntary submission and servitude to a new, harsh and austere order. With Visser's departure, the umbilical cord is severed and Marais is on his own facing inordinate tests of strength and will-power, threatening torment poetically conceived:

> Nooit onheilige gedaante uit die diepte van die hel
> Half so dreigend, half so fel
> As die skadu, Mabalêl
> As die skadu, wat benee jou
> Uit die diepte opwaarts wel.[39]

A study of Marais's poetry reveals black pessimism mitigated only by "Die Groot Verlange," the great longing for oblivion in morphine, the dark stream, the deep river that snuffs out the flame of hatred:

> Blus uit, O Diep Rivier, die vlam van haat;--
> Die groot verlange wat my nooit verlaat.[40]

Dr Rob Antonissen views "Diep Rivier" as "'n persoonlike belydenis van Marais se hunkering na die dood."[41] Fugard

explores the death wish theme in a later sequence within the film and from the outset the viewer is aware of a growing life/death struggle, with the Meyer family firmly ranged on the side of life, while Marais hovers on the threshold of death. As they view it, their challenge is to reclaim him, to bring him back to sanity, sobriety and strength. Superficially, it would seem a contest weighted in favour of the Meyers, stalwart, stoical and strong, proponents of fresh air, good food and biblical precepts, while Marais presents a weak image, physically and mentally tattered.

Fugard, however, employs a voice over technique that successfully creates an impressive image of Marais the scientist, naturalist, man of letters, an effective contrast to the pathos of his weakness and disintegration. Through the voice over technique we see his strength and his stature, with quotations not only relevant to his present condition but illuminating realms of enquiry and knowledge as yet unexplored by his contemporaries. The thematic material of voice overs blends and fuses into a rich design primarily concerned with pain in man and animals, its implications and resolution through narcotics. Fugard draws on a wide range of Marais's work, quoting from "Addiction and Depression" and "Phyletic and Individual Memory," chapters in <u>The Soul of the Ape</u>; as well as lengthy quotations from <u>My Friends the Baboons</u>. These quotations not only reinforce the viewer's impression of Marais as an intellectual giant of his day, deepening our awareness of Marais as a man ahead of his time, but they have a special place within the screenplay, within the action as it unfolds: the first voice over, a reflection on pain, establishes the whole scenario of drug addiction and is a verbal

adjunct to the vignette of the hypodermic syringe, candle stub and teaspoon we see for the first time (The Guest, p. 19); another lengthy voice over dealing with the addict's craving for euphoria and dread of abstinence is a poignant commentary that heightens the urgency of his actions as he injects himself with morphine (The Guest, p. 24); yet another quotation recounts the powerlessness of conventional restraints on a sufferer in the maelstrom of addiction (The Guest, p. 40), a predication that has all the force of a prediction; while the lengthy dissertation on the price the baboon and man pay for the emergence of their new psyche and the submersion of the instinctive soul suggests the painful birth of a new mind and Marais's apparent recovery.

Leon Rousseau states that while at Steenkampskraal, Marais wrote and completed the chapter on "Addiction" in his book The Soul of the Ape. The chapter, later published in the magazine Die Huisgenoot, was his confession of faith. The quotations therefore have a further significance--they indicate the alert mind of the scientist capable of observing and analysing his own addiction and travail. It adds weight to Dr Visser's injunction to the Meyers: "Advocate Marais could become Chief Justice if we can get him back to good health" (The Guest, p. 17). The long excerpts from Marais's book My Friends the Baboons (The Guest, pp. 60-63) are two-pronged in purpose: once again an image is created of an imposing naturalist, a man unlike any other, who lived in close proximity to a troop of baboons, studying their way of life and gaining acceptance as their friend and counsellor; while at the same time the theme of pain, the dominant condition of life for man and baboon, is introduced, the attribute of pain acquired in the course of

evolution.

The voice overs successfully evoke a literary quality, not only providing a commentary on current events but rounding out the time sequences with references to the past, giving a wrap-around vision. It is a technique employed with distinction in the film Out of Africa (1985), depicting the life of the distinguished Danish writer Isak Dinesen. Voice overs in this instance, delivered at a slow tempo to indicate the process of literary composition, have a narrative purpose as well as giving an unmistakeable literary texture to the film. The quotations, however, do not have the philosophical or psychological complexity of those used in The Guest.

Marais's stature as a literary and knowledgeable man is reinforced by an array of quotations, including an apposite and lyrical effusion by the high-priest of narcotics, Thomas de Quincey, taken from his book Confessions of an English Opium Eater. This quotation in particular places Marais within a nineteenth century framework of opium-related writings: those of Charles Baudelaire, Francis Thompson, George Crabbe and Edgar Allan Poe to name but a few.[42] A liberal sprinkling of Latin phrases link him with the community of scholars. Phrases such as "papio ursinus ursinus," the specific name of a chacma baboon; "cogito ergo sum," and "suffero ergo sum," represent a vocabulary shared by Marais and Visser, elitist phrases that in the minds of viewers set Marais apart from the simplistic Meyers. Literary references reveal his mental versatility and cultural breadth of vision, such as an interest in Egyptology that dated back to his student days in London (The Guest, p. 71). The cosmopolitan nature of a man conversant with the seductive if not decadent aspects of European culture contrasts

sharply with the simplicity of Oom Doors, who uses quotations that amplify the biblical background and Calvinist commitment of the family.

The biblical readings of Oom Doors focus to a large extent on texts that underline unremittingly the evil of those who "err in vision" and "stumble in judgment" (The Guest, p. 81). It expresses the family's repugnance and disapprobation of Marais's ways; the moral road of rectitude that separates the pious from the impious. It is a cultural clash of discernible contrasts between values represented by the family and those projected by Marais. It is, however, more complex than that, for Marais's Calvinist roots go deep. It is not a straightforward confrontation between two opposing forces. They are warring elements within his psyche, a conflict akin to Fugard's realisation of contrary forces in his own nature. As pointed out in the chapter on "Fugard's Women," Fugard acknowledged the strength and persistence of Calvinist traits in his temperament.

The function of the poetry quoted in The Guest serves a similar end to that of the literary prose quotations, with this difference: Visser's excerpt from "Lotus Land," his own poem, urging a return to the ordinary world, links Marais's prognosis with that of his people generally. Two poems by Marais, different in style and content, are included. "Die Spinnerak Rokkie" (The Guest, p. 52), sentimental verses ostensibly designed to entertain nine-year-old Little Corrie and to feed her fairy fantasies, tells of a fragile dress of cobwebs in which a fairy was blown away. It is not too fanciful to discern in this simple tale the story of an alluring yet dangerous beauty that cloaks one's existence in fragile

splendour yet threatens destruction at the same time. The poem, "Die Lied van Suid-Afrika," in which South Africa demands everything from her people, claiming as her right "Die vrug van eindelose pyn" (The Guest, p. 82), is Marais's manifesto of suffering, his belief in pain as the substratum of life itself.

The dream sequences in the script that hark back to Marais's days in the Waterberg, are hallucinatory in character. Yet they are less the chimeras of an overwrought imagination than dramatic techniques to reveal Marais as he really is, naked, defenceless and disorientated. In another confused dream, he opens his mouth in a silent scream reminiscent of Serge, the shell-shocked hobo in The Occupation. The spectre of an existence dependent on the charity and compassion of others links Marais with Serge. Serge represents a skid-row destitution not that remote from Marais's tortured world. The Waterberg baboons with whom he co-habited for several years in an episode of unique naturalist-scientific interest, recur as a leitmotif in his dream life. He identified with their animal terror. His dream images serve as "gates of the unconscious psyche."[43] His dreams were not dead, outmoded forms but part of his living present. An incessant stream of fantasies and assaults of the unconscious were clearly emotions concealed in imagery. These images arose from psychic conditions induced by a tapered drug supply. In a strange way Marais drew conclusions from the insights of his unconscious mind, for his fearsome flight from a leopard in his dream is followed by his attempted escape from Steenkampskraal. In Jungian terms, Marais allowed the images to rise up, understood them and drew conclusions from them. Jung maintained it was right to

interpret dreams, "for that is how dreams are intended. They are facts from which we must proceed."[44]

It is significant that the two dream sequences are informed by the sounds and sights of an African night (The Guest, pp. 21, 41), for Marais, in a chapter written at the farm, expounded his theory of Hesperian depression in man that reached its highest flow in the evening. To the Boers, night signified the approach of death, "the utter futility of human life; the distressing certainty of the end of all things; and the helplessness and paltriness of man."[45]

This sadness, revealed in religious literature and in melancholy nocturnes, is a feature of chacma life, the baboon species Marais studied and which Fugard utilizes in both dream sequences. Marais wrote that at sunset "a singular transformation came over the entire scene."[46] The sound of mourning, associated with parting and death, represented the pain of consciousness. Through dream sequences Fugard establishes an equation: Night = darkness = pain, an equation fundamental to Marais's philosophy. The tenets of this theory of Hesperian depression are conveyed not in academic parlance but in dramatic, visual imagery denoting darkness and fear. In the final hallucinatory sequence, when Marais capitulates again to his morphine addiction and injects a massive dose into his veins, the equation of darkness, depression and pain is extended to embrace death, the ultimate darkness. It is, however, death in different guises. The poem Marais quotes is his own "Diep Rivier," superficially a eulogy to death (The Guest, p. 75) but to those familiar with Marais's fatal morphine addiction, "Diep Rivier" represents the stream of morphine bringing oblivion and relief. Darkness and death

pervaded Marais's vision of life, "die verdonkerde lewensvisie"[47] to which Preller, his lifelong friend, referred. In the sombre sounds of "Diep Rivier," one discerns with clarity Marais's personal suffering and his longing for death.

He identifies with the anguish of Othello, whose very blackness symbolizes pain and suffering. With alliterative flair and with economy of words, Marais cries: "Poor Othello. Doubt, darkness, and death" (The Guest, p. 77), a summary of the philosophy contained in his prose and poetry. This sequence echoes and reinforces sentiments Marais expresses earlier: One can compare "with hands washed pure from blood" (p. 77) with "one night's heavenly sleep callest back to the guilty man the visions of his infancy, and hands washed pure from blood (The Guest, p. 56).[48] Othello is a symbol visually and metaphorically of darkness, guilt and torment, a pain Marais suggests can be partly alleviated and diminished by narcotics. Aside from his own oppressive sense of guilt, Marais's preoccupation with Othello can also be ascribed to his lifelong interest in people of colour. Rousseau points out that for decades Marais was drawn to those of another colour--in London, in the Waterberg, in Pretoria--"they who, in these times and places, were pariahs like himself."[49]

The question remains, however, what of the black man and woman on Steenkampskraal, Stuurie and Lily? Do the value judgements applied to Othello attach to them? Lily and Stuurie are African employees on the farm and in their servitude they possibly represent silent suffering. This view is substantiated in the dialogue between Marais and Visser in which Marais advocates the narcotic "niksdoen en droom" as an opiate for Stuurie (The Guest, p. 56). In Marais's eyes Stuurie not

only wants this but needs it as an anodyne for the pain of consciousness. While convalescing, Marais finds a dismantled still, puts it together and makes mampoer, a potent alcoholic beverage, a euphoric drug he sells to the farm Africans and gives to Stuurie. Marais is dispensing his remedy for life's pain; searching for and finding the panacea for suffering.

Overall, as Marais's final poem denotes, all endure the pain attendant on those living in Africa, whether black or white: "En vlymend as 'n swaard, geheg / Bly van my liefde slegs die pyn" (The Guest, p. 79). Sheila Roberts views this poem as a transition from the self-enclosed, existential suffering of Marais to the socially based suffering of Piet Bezuidenhout in A Lesson from Aloes.[50] J. Coetzee maintains the poem is relevant only to those who allege that Africa has failed to love them enough. "I doubt that it awakes a sympathetic response in most South Africans, to whom Africa is a mother who has nourished them and their forebears for millions of years," he writes.[51] What both these critics overlook is the eclectic nature of Marais, a man who evolved a doctrine peculiarly suited to himself, a man who fled from the world's pain to new frontiers of personal perception, "dim and remote regions of the mind."[52] As Robert Ardrey points out: "his concern with psychic evolution was so profound as to be applicable to us all--harmless ape, belligerent baboon, killer man."[53]

Within the screenplay there are allusions to redemptive possibilities, potentially assuaging the pain of existence and the implacable terror of Africa's domination of her people. These possibilities are located in women and children generally, and in Tant Corrie and little Corrie specifically.

Tant Corrie is the eternal mother, nourishing her family, sustaining sorrow with enviable stoicism and emerging, if not triumphant, at least Phoenix-like from past traumas, a rebirth effected through religious convictions, and emotional and physical strength. Little Corrie is the personification of innocence, life uncorrupted. Suspicious of Marais during his bouts of addiction, she warms to him in his periods of relative abstinence. The relationship between Marais and Little Corrie reflects the magnetism Marais consistently exerted over small children. Little Corrie's uncomplicated acceptance of and fondness for Marais mirrored similar relationships documented by Marais's biographer, Leon Rousseau. Children enjoyed his story-telling, fantasy rather than fact. He no longer felt it necessary to justify himself in the eyes of little people. All this is clear in his bond with Little Corrie.

Brenda, a former lover of Marais, who briefly visits the farm, is summarily dismissed from his world and life. There is authenticity in this brief excursion into a relatively sad and sordid episode in his life, but in aesthetic terms it achieves little other than to focus with greater intensity on Marais's alienation, a man wil fully cutting himself off from supportive relationships. Brenda's visit is a brief and relatively vacuous vignette compared to the solidity of Tant Corrie's compassionate presence and the prolonged interaction of Marais with the child. Brenda's visit highlights this contrast in attitudes as well as his evasion of a commitment demanded and desired by a lover. Marais's relationship with Brenda, that of man/woman, threatens him and recedes in importance, superseded by that of man/child and man/mother, a truth instantly and intuitively perceived by Brenda who exclaims on arrival: "Your

little friend doesn't like me" (The Guest, p. 64). Brenda is the unwelcome intruder.

It is Marais's fate to be "The Guest," a temporary sojourner in the homes and within the circles of other families. It might have contributed to and aggravated his acute pessimism, the loneliness of a man widowed early in life. As the film ends with Marais disappearing into the distance, we wonder, as Robert Ardrey does, where he will go and whom he will visit:

> Just as a remarkable guest, one of vision and many anecdotes and a remote madness, might spend an evening by our fire, then glance at his watch and rise, so Marais takes his leave. There is a suddenness that is part of our knowledge that we shall never see him again.[54]

Marais was a remarkable guest at Steenkampskraal as well as a trying one.

The screenplay and film succeed in revealing his vision, "essentially one which was produced in an interaction with Africa" (The Guest, p. 8). Fugard, convinced that Marais's story held relevance for South Africa wrote: "What writer today has answered the blind patriotism of our existing national anthem with a more withering and final recognition of the truth."[55]

Finally, there is the question of Fugard's extensive use of Afrikaans in The Guest, perhaps more so than in any other play. For the filmgoer it does not present a problem in terms of comprehending the main thrust of the narrative, for it is restricted in use to relatively peripheral diegetic areas. For the student of Fugard, however, these areas are no longer peripheral but central to an understanding of the play, the man and the dramatist. Fugard, in this instance, has rejected

translation and even the merits of good translation, which he is equipped to do. The sounds and sonorities are hard yet melodic, germanic yet generous, reflecting a specific geographical terrain and an emotional territory Fugard knows well. The Afrikaans is integrated skil fully and naturally into the text. It colours it with regional tones and nuances. In the bilingual script Fugard achieves what history failed to do for so long, namely, the creation of a homogeneous society enriched by cross-cultural hybridisation, in which Boer and Brit give of their best within a truly unified framework. The linguistic structure of The Guest has this ideological perspective as a viable sub-text. Both Marais and Fugard, cosmopolitan intellects yet sons of the soil, represent the amalgamation of two cultures.

Marigolds in August

The film Marigolds in August, which won the Otto Dibelius film prize and a special Berlin Bear award, was directed by Ross Devenish in 1979. It therefore represented a step further in a collaborative writer/director relationship of trust and respect, important factors for Fugard as an artist.

It was in September 1976 that Fugard's "terrible yearning to 'tell a story' once more--to set out, discover and live in an imagined world"[56] focused on Daan, a gardener in his employ, whose tribulations he was conversant with over a long period of time. In 1968 he first recorded with passion and insight--and at regular intervals thereafter--incidents incorporated later into the screenplay. Five years later, in 1973, he wrote of the problems of Melton, an employee who had two pondoks in the

bush on the Ashram, Fugard's property at Skoenmakerskop. A notice from the Divisional Council demanded the demolition of "said illegal structures"[57] within 14 days. Other components of the play had their roots in characters Fugard observed closely: Sophie, Anna, Emily and Paulus Olifant, the snake-catcher. The screenplay grew out of specifics, real people and real places, of great importance to the cinematographer, as Devenish pointed out in an interview.[58]

Fugard wrote with desperation: "I can't see past the appalling wreckage of human lives that our society is creating. A dumb and despairing rage at what we are doing."[59] In Marigolds, however, Fugard looked beyond the wreckage, salvaging hope and constructing a brotherhood informed with the redemptive power of love. For Marigolds is a profoundly religious script, exploring as it does the human condition while at the same time revealing through the central trinity of characters insights that uplift and ultimately console.

For Fugard it was more than consolation. Writing Marigolds conceivably healed in part the pain of knowing he was ineffective against the evils of his time and his place. For encoded within the structure of the play are several radical messages as the protagonists struggle towards new dimensions in which to live. The Norwegian poet Tomas Tronströmer provided a key when he wrote: "Two truths draw nearer each other. One comes from inside, one comes from outside, and where they meet we have a chance to see ourselves," a quotation Fugard used to preface his work. In the conflict generated by the meeting of Daan and Melton, both proponents of harsh truths formulated in response to even harsher conditions, we do indeed glimpse ourselves.

The selfishness of Daan and the violence of Melton are two expressions on a human face. The accommodation of one to the other, the emotional catharsis achieved and the spiritual growth attained not only by the protagonists but by the perceptive viewer of the film and reader of the screenplay constitute the true meaning of this work. There is a Daan in all of us, whose instinct to guard and fortify what is ours leads us to turn a blind eye to the needs of our brothers. There is a Melton within all men, hounded by despair and death to transgress accepted social and legal norms. And beyond the bounds of common man there are those philosophers and sages, such as Paulus Olifant the snake-catcher, whose hand and heart reach out with messianic love to all.

Described by Rina Minervini as "a simple, clear and moving statement about the painful dilemmas of poverty under the limitations imposed by South Africa's racial laws,"[60] Marigolds is far more, probing as it does beyond an inequitable present to a potentially violent resolution of the South African enigma. It is undeniably a prophetic work. It is a film suffused with social consciousness, the work of a dramatist and poet committed to a cause as visioned in personal terms.

Marigolds is the third film in the trilogy created by Fugard and Devenish: Boesman and Lena, their first joint film enterprise deals with an impoverished coloured couple; The Guest is a probing study of an Afrikaner scientist and drug addict; while Marigolds deals with the African predicament. Together they form a consciousness and colour spectrum comprising an almost comprehensive South African experience. One qualifies this absolute with "almost" in view of the

absence from these screenplays of authentic Asian/Indian and English South African voices. The title of the film, Marigolds in August, is a pointed summary of the central quandary of Daan and Melton, who are expected to live subject to cruel laws of an unnatural order, just as Daan is ordered to plant marigolds in August, knowing full well wintry frosts will blight their growth and they will die. The laws of nature are fatally flouted, just as the stringent laws of an apartheid regime destroy the lives of black South Africans. The marigolds in August are an effective dramatic metaphor for those South Africans enduring the hardships and penalties of the black man in a white man's world.

Marigolds is essentially about growth, whether from seedlings to plants, from boyhood to manhood, or from selfishness to generosity. Despite harsh physical and political climates, the play records a progression, a movement towards new development and perception. The Abakwetha, Xhosa circumcision initiates, are a powerful symbol of transition from one realm to another. With their faces painted white, they appear like phantoms in limbo, in a state of non-being, no longer boys and not yet men. The metaphysics of growth, the philosophical consequences of movement from one stage to another are posited and explored by Fugard. Once again he alerts us to the significance of his theme with his "big word syndrome," the verbal neon light technique to rouse the listener and viewer to new heights of awareness: "To be a man! It's a big word hey Daan,"[61] Paulus says. And in the context of the play and the issues it explores and lays bare, this is a big word. The word itself is savoured by those who use it and try it on for size. What does the word really mean to

Paulus, Daan, Melton and the Abakwetha? For Paulus, it means compassion, acknowledging the brotherhood of man, recognizing one's common and shared humanity. "Real men help each other. Real men don't laugh when somebody else is in trouble," he says (Marigolds, p. 58). Melton, whose obligations to society are negated by society's failure to meet his family's needs, formulates a violent response, a measure of his concept of manhood. Daan's maturation from self-seeking individual, a white man's boy, to a human being subscribing to a man's code entailing responsibility for one's fellow man, reflects the most dramatic personal development of the three. Viewed from this perspective, his dilemma is the most riveting, eclipsing the problems of Melton and placing Daan firmly at the centre of the performance.

Paulus expounds certain philosophical premises, primarily those associated with the Judeo/Christian ethic. His role is that of an agent effecting Daan's conversion to a broader more humane outlook. As important as his role is, he is, like Fugard himself, an observer. He is another of Fugard's alter egos, projecting an enlightened view and catalysing the actions of others. It is therefore a role requiring greater objectivity, the capacity to stand back and view the words and actions of others, relating these to a moral code and creed, in this instance that of true manhood. Melton's transformation from passivity to action is gradual and almost predictable. It epitomises the slow growth and direction of black nationalism over a long period, from submission and subservience to self-assertion, aggression and ultimately violence. There is nothing sudden or startling in Melton's progression from law-abiding citizen to first offender. Melton is a true marigold

in August; economic/legal factors have stunted the growth of a man whose family structure might otherwise have flourished and stabilised society. His story is not unusual in South Africa, reflecting a well-documented trend of deprivation leading inevitably to brushes with the law. Daan, too, takes what is not his but on an inoffensive level. He picks up a pair of spectacles at the roadside and he encourages Alice to take cigarettes for him from their employer. He and Melton, in varying degrees, manifest thieving temperaments. Together with Paulus, whose very name resonates with evangelical meanings, they stand together on their personal Calvary, the Christ-like figure and the two thieves, nailed to their respective crosses of poverty and suffering.

Although the critic must bear in mind that these characters derived from Fugard's observations of people he knew at / Schoenmakerskop, his imaginative and interpretive skills transmute his material from biography to creative artistry. It is significant that Paulus is a snake-catcher, a man with control over the snake, the biblical symbol of temptation: "Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made."[62] In addition, Paulus perceives beauty in the snakes he spares and conserves. The world is his Garden of Eden, a place of abundance. With the declaration of S'kop environs as a nature reserve and the prohibition of fishing and hunting, his Eden changes to Paradise Lost. Yet his resourcefulness reassures the viewer--he will adapt and devise survival techniques. Paulus, too, has a troubled past; he hints at a spell in prison. A marigold in August, he defies adversity. His rehabilitation, affinity with the earth, humanitarian code and compassionate creed give hope to others

encountering setbacks, hardships and pain.

The symbolic significance of the snake changes in relation to Daan and Melton, who view it with fear and superstition as an instrument of death. Impotent with rage at the threat Melton poses to his relatively secure existence, Daan overturns a tin containing the snake, consciously unleashing forces of evil on a man he has tried to understand and accommodate within his own existence to the best of his intellectual ability and emotional capacity. Melton's response to the snake, the agent of death, is fatalistic submission: "let the snake choose!" he states calmly (Marigolds, p. 57), highlighting the dilemma and doom of surplus people with insufficient jobs and inadequate housing, the chronically poor and dispossessed black people of South Africa. His courage is born of desperation, he has nothing to lose and everything to gain; whereas Daan has everything to lose and nothing to gain. He can do little to dissuade Melton from his determined course, a course that threatens Daan's future security, as any police investigation of house-breaking will reveal Daan's "illegal" presence in the area.

Their behavioural patterns are governed by and directed towards socio-economic and political factors. They operate within a rigid apartheid framework that contains and controls their every movement. Despite their desire to live their lives they have no choices and, like Fugard himself, they are ineffective against what they know to be evil.[63] Through no fault of their own they are unable to support and sustain adequately those they love. Melton's guilt at the death of his child, denied nutrition and medicine, can be attributed to the apartheid system. With no element of choice, their only option

is obstructing the system where possible. Their real challenge within these limitations is to foster emotional growth so that the quotation with which Fugard prefaces the play can be fully realized, human beings at the confluence of outer and inner truths understanding the realities of existence and perceiving their true selves. Fugard posits here the value of human comprehension, the Socratic dictum: "Know thyself." In modern psychological parlance, understanding is the essential prerequisite to healing. Their challenge is to create a sense of self or a new viable reality as alternatives to the destructive, annihilating stranglehold of an apartheid society riddled with labour laws and influx control regulations, legislated discrimination on racial grounds responsible for immeasurable human suffering. Fugard reveals a landscape littered with human debris. In probing beneath the surface of the body politic he reveals poverty and unemployment. Daan and Melton, and Paulus to a lesser extent, are products of the white man's world, just as Lena and Boesman are the system's superfluous effluent, waste products existing on the fringes of white South Africa, under conditions of debasing and grinding poverty. As Leo Marquard states: "they are subject to a great many restrictions, and both fear and resent the police who must enforce the law."[64] This author points out that many coloured people were so light in colour that they were able to "pass" as white and so enjoy the privileges of more select residential areas, better schools for their children, superior travel facilities and political, economic and cultural freedom. Paulus Olifant, a coloured man, once "tried for white" but the attempt did not work. A man close to nature, he rejects pretence and distortion. He has left behind the mutilating

apartheid society and found rehabilitation and healing in the bush. When Daan produces his pair of spectacles, picked up at a picnic spot, Paulus puts them on and laughs. As Fugard notes: "they do something very strange to the world" (Marigolds, p. 64). They represent the white man's vision, his way of looking at life, a perspective rejected by Paulus in his search for the good untramelled by man-made curbs and checks.

Paulus is totally at peace with himself and the world in which he has chosen to live, the bush, where he successfully evades the restrictions imposed by a racialistic society. Fugard does not spell out the reasons for Paulus' rejection of the Try-for-White experiment. Yet we may safely presume that a life fraught with risks and subsequent anxiety, based on a deception however justifiable, is a world alien to his temperament and outlook. It is due to his inner strength and charisma that he can successfully communicate to Daan his vision of the brotherhood of man. It is Paulus, Fugard's alter ego, who conveys to Daan a sense of the underlying humanity common to all, one of a series of fairly radical statements Fugard makes in the play. We see the characters beginning to understand one another as people with individual problems. As Ross Devenish pointed out in an interview, "the affirmation of human dignity in dark days is probably the most important thing that we can do."[65]

Fugard's characters are shackled by circumstances beyond their control. They are prisoners of a system, denied freedom of movement and the right to sell their labour in the marketplace. How they respond, in what direction they move, how they grow in moral stature and perception (Daan), or how they compromise their former integrity (Melton), constitutes the

central issues explored with honesty by the playwright. Daan, a man of average intelligence, senses with intuitive understanding the threats and constraints of the society in which he finds himself. It is a slow and painful realisation, the result of a Socratic dialectic he engages in with Paulus, who pushes him towards new psychological frontiers, where the ego is submerged in concern for one's fellow human beings. At Paulus' urging, Daan projects himself with difficulty into Melton's pressured world of responsibilities. Understanding floods his consciousness as he gets beneath the other man's skin, an exercise in transmogrification. It is a magical and potent process for Daan, sharpening his little exercised intellect into extreme sensitivity, enabling him to identify not only with Melton in his predicament but also with all suffering. It is a measure of his new finely-tuned consciousness that he releases the snake caught by Paulus. This is a gesture, more than his offer of a day's work to Melton, that reflects his profound grasp of new realities. Daan, a man with a few prison terms behind him, a man who knows with deadly certainty "There's nothing you can do. When you're inside" (Marigolds, p. 60), is driven by an inner compulsion to liberate the "wyfie kapel in 'n blikkie" (Marigolds, p. 60). He can no longer condone the imposition of suffering in any form, especially the diminution of freedom. Daan has progressed towards Paulus' position, a perceptible movement towards compassion and concern, away from the former denial of brotherhood ("I'm not your boetie!"--Marigolds, p. 47) to acquiesence in Melton's choice of actions. Despite his native distrust of others and his desire to be left alone, he is drawn into a confrontation not of his making. At the end of the play, he is a changed

man, abrasive contact with others whittling away his superficial callousness. In the end Daan cares. Through self-centred preoccupation and concern he has moved towards ideals of self-sacrifice, thereby attaining personal freedom. Finally, it is a joyous self-realisation characterised by laughter, Fugard's note of affirmation that echoes consistently through his plays. As the film ends Daan laughs and laughs, amused by the distortions of the white man's vision and the corruption of the white man's soul. The laughter is a measure of his own liberation from the system through which he has suffered, suffering that intensified his own ontological insecurity.

In Daan, Fugard has created a credible character in whom natural curiosity about the universe predisposes him to change. A man interested in sea, sky and wind, a man who asks "What ... How ... Why?" (Marigolds, p. 63) is an individual not only with a thirst for knowledge but also with an open mind. It is the tabula rasa on which Paulus can inscribe his text of love and mutual help in adversity (Marigolds, p. 58). We watch the master and his disciples, their interaction precipitating a comparable growth in the viewer. For ultimately Fugard demands that his audience engage in the issues he debates dramatically. We, as bystanders, cannot remain indifferent to Melton's crisis, Daan's dilemma or Paulus' creed. Finally, the play succeeds in raising our consciousness, in catalysing subtly our responses to questions that must be asked. In a dramatically viable form, the playwright confronts us with real social issues endemic to the South African landscape yet related to universal values formulated by thinking men and women through centuries of philosophical debate. In Paulus and Daan we come close to ideals underlying the Franciscan order when first

established, wandering priests without possessions, united in a fellowship consecrated by love. Fugard has given an eternal theme--man in conflict with society--specific names and a regional face. Tautly woven, the screenplay is a commentary on a local situation yet within it are all-embracing themes of relevance to viewers everywhere.

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7. Fugard's Women

As evidenced in his Notebooks,[1] Fugard has a grasp of feminine psychology derived from acute observation, sensitivity to mood and feeling generally, and a lifelong ability to interact well with women as testified to by Mel Gussow:

> A responsive conversationalist, he listens closely to others and approaches all questions with the utmost seriousness. Women are naturally drawn to him. he has a generous nature and warm capacity for laughter, and he is vulnerable to the point of self-injury.[2]

He grew up in a matriarchal family, where a strong woman was bread-winner. As his father, an alcoholic and self-pitying cripple, sank inexorably into indolence, his mother assumed a correspondingly dominant position in the household, running the Jubilee Boarding House and subsequently the St. George's tearoom, both in Port Elizabeth, boyhood memories that feature prominently in "Master Harold"..and the boys. Thus in his own life Fugard witnessed the mother as combatant, the fighter who took on the world despite great odds. His creation of Milly was partly patterned upon his mother, as well as the playwright's observations of the landlady with fading aspirations who ran a rambling near-derelict double-storeyed boarding house at the bottom of Hospital Hill in Johannesburg.[3]

People are Living There

People are Living There[4] was first drafted in 1962 and

staged for the first time six years later on 13 March 1968 at Glasgow's Citizens' Theatre. In 1969 a Capab production opened in Cape Town, with Fugard as Don and Yvonne Bryceland as Milly. Although written in Port Elizabeth, it deviated from Fugard's previous work: it did not have a Port Elizabeth setting, it was not overtly political and it was written more directly from life than any of the other plays. Milly in many ways is a preparatory study for Lena in Boesman and Lena, in her familiarity with pain and emptiness, in her search for truth, in her endeavour to establish an identity through memory and in her need to have that identity confirmed through the act of human witnessing. Milly is Fugard's vehicle for conveying his thoughts on survival and defiance:

> For six years my attempts to understand the possibility of affirmation in an essentially morbid society were dominated by and finally invested in three women: Mildred Constance Jenkins was the first, Hester Smit the second, and Lena the culmination.[5]

In her tussle with Don, she is the focus of the play, pulsating with outrage and vehemence. She articulates the positive attitudes that emanate from Fugard's women. Physically beaten or emotionally browbeaten, they assert themselves and overcome. Through their survival in a hostile world, they triumph amid the mental degradation, physical squalor and social subjection of their lives. Spiritually depleted and with few resources other than her spunky spirit, Milly views herself as a victim. Her realisation that she will survive is a commitment to life and an abrogation of the dark forces threatening to engulf her. From the dross of her existence, she distills an irrefutable truth: "Mildred Jenkins you are still alive" (People, p. 158), a perception that demands courage. Her yearning voice is an

authentic sound and her poetic exposure of inner self is uplifting and moving for the viewer. In what looks suspiciously like a no-win situation, the old trooper re-invents herself as Milly the survivor. Through conflict with Ahlers, Don, Shorty and Sissy, she discovers who she is. There is victory in her rebellion: against dismissal by Ahlers, against Don's probing analysis, against life's indifference and rejection. She rides gallantly into her Valley of Death but rides out again to tell the tale, as do all Fugard's women. Hester Smit resolves after a night of turmoil sifting through her past to "get back to it, in it, be it, be me again the way it was when I walked in."[6] Lena, too, proclaims: "I'm alive, Boesman. There's daylights left in me."[7] There is an indestructible core to Fugard's women, arising phoenix-like from the ashes of hopes and dreams and their confrontation with nihilistic forces in their lives. Their triumph lies in their acceptance, resilience and determination to continue despite existential fear and alienation, an oppressive sense of the meaninglessness of life.

Fugard studied philosophy at the University of Cape Town and Sartrean existentialism influenced his thought and work. Sartre viewed Nietzsche as an existentialist in his romantic emphasis upon the passion, anxiety and decision of individual man and his sense of the tragic predicament of humanity in modern civilisation, perspectives articulated by Fugard, who understood man's transcendent need to know that he exists, and that this is the root of all his anxieties. Both Lena and Milly desire to authenticate their existence in this way. Don, a student of Sartrean philosophy, reflects the belief that

existentialism renders human life possible, a doctrine affirming "that every truth and every action imply both an environment and a human subjectivity."[8] Inherent in Sartre's philosophy is the possibility of choice. Christian existentialists and atheistic existentialists both believe that existence comes before essence, that we must begin from the subjective. Atheistic existentialism of which Sartre is a representative, declares with consistency that if God does not exist there is at least one being whose existence comes before its essence, a "being which exists before it can be defined by any conception of it. That being is man or, as Heidegger has it, the human reality."[9] In Sartre's view, man is nothing but what he makes of himself. Man, according to Sartre, propels himself towards a future with full awareness. Man will only attain existence when he is what he purposes to be, not what he may wish to be. Ultimately, man is responsible for what he is.

Milly's pain, defined by Don as anguish, is an existential despair and abandonment. She is alone, forsaken, condemned to be free. She cannot count upon anyone other than herself. She describes this state graphically: "It's like a plug has been pulled out and something's drained away down a big, black hole, leaving everything stranded" (People, p. 129). For Sartre, Fugard and his creation Don, hopes are abortive, dreams deceptive and expectations unfulfilled. Reality alone is reliable. Consequently, Fugard views Milly as responsible for her actions and her life. Her destiny lies within herself and it is this sense of self that confers dignity on Milly, Hester and Lena. They are not the objects or playthings of man; they discover their true selves through the mediation of others.

"The other is indispensable to my existence, and equally so to any knowledge I can have of myself," states Sartre.[10] Fugard's women legislate for themselves and decide for themselves. They experience nausea and anguish but they seek liberation, to realise their humanity. "What man needs is to find himself again and to understand that nothing can save him from himself," Sartre observes.[11] In this sense, he is optimistic and his doctrine is one of action.

Milly has the capacity to free herself from despair, to inform her life with victory. In this sense, her story and that of Hester and Lena are compelling human documents. It is significant that they abjure suicide and resolve to accept and re-shape the remnants of their lives. Hunger, both physical and emotional, humiliation, fear and anger are endured with the aid of humour, closely-guarded images of loved ones and the healing power of nature. Their moments of comfort, through making sense of apparently senseless suffering, establish the will to live.[12] Fugard's women, victims of love and life, find meaning in their suffering. In spite of the indignities, they continue to grow. Nietzsche said "He who has a why to live can bear with almost any how,"[13] which underscores the desire to know and understand that links Lena, Milly and Hester. In Viktor Frankl's story of his life, every circumstance conspired to make the concentration camp prisoner lose his hold. All the familiar goals in life were snatched away. What remained, the last of the human freedoms, was the ability to choose one's attitude in a given set of circumstances. This ultimate freedom, recognized by modern existentialists, takes on vivid significance in Milly's story. Milly, Hester and Lena rise above their outward fate and suffering. Fugard focuses on

profound human problems and takes a hopeful view of the human capacity to transcend the human predicament.

Milly finds it difficult to come to terms with her world. There is pathos and pity in her situation. She is middle-aged, a spinster, and, in a very real sense, an outcast banished from the concubinary bed of her German lodger, Ahlers. Even Don, who thinks he knows everything, cannot gauge the depth of her response to life. "It hurts. There's pain. Sometimes ... sometimes it's in the colour of things. They go grey," she confides to Don (People, p. 129). As Don Maclennan notes, "without the strenuous effort to re-enact the past there can be no adequate explanation for the present."[14] Milly's exploration of the past is a journey that links her with Hester and Lena, all three characterised by their need for a sense of direction, to know and recognise the signposts along life's path. Milly's trip is figurative, whereas Hester boards a train and Lena traverses the mudflats of Port Elizabeth. All three are consumed by curiosity concerning their origins: Milly trawls the seabed of her childhood, Hester re-visits her parental home and Lena tries to re-arrange into a semblance of order the chaos of her past. Theirs is a sorority of pain and suffering, nostalgia and analysis. Once Milly was a child in a white dress, full of hope and happiness; Hester had a mother who loved her; and Lena had prospects of employment and independence. Somewhere along the line their happy expectations were confounded. The transition from hope to hopelessness, from happiness to pain, was a slow process, a tortuous draining of colour and life force until a human being became a patient in a sick world, nauseated by the absence of meaning. Milly and Hester are both physically sickened by their lives to the

point of vomiting. These are Fugard's archetypal characters, not the heroes but life's victims. Milly has been emotionally abused and her pain is an aching heart. Lena represents abuse of a different order, battering not only of the mind and heart but of the body. Milly's indictment of Shorty and Don is a measure of her suffering--they have failed her just as mankind and life have failed her. She has reached the existential bedrock of bitterness, signalled in Fugardian terms by Sartrean nausea. "You nauseate me. He teases you. He's teasing you all the time, and I'm disgusted," she tells Shorty (People, p. 153).

Milly never submits passively to life's onslaughts. In her misery she lashes out at others, especially those with whom she shares this dark night of her soul. In torment she strips away pretence and confronts them with the truth as she perceives it. She is revealed in all her anger, desperation and pain: "I demand Justice! I can't show you blood or bruises. The victim isn't even dead," she cries in words that vividly ally her with Lena, another casualty of life (People, p. 152).

Her salvation is her urge to move forward. She dismisses Don's scenario of alienation, the dilemma of existential man:

> ... you end up in your little room with your old age pension and a blind bitch for friendship. From then on it's just a matter of days. When they're good, the two of you crawl out to a bench in the sun where she can hate the pigeons and you can hate the people (People, p. 131).

Milly vehemently rejects this dismal destiny and Don's disturbing observations on her predicament. Fugard focuses on shortcomings and failures, bogeys that Milly characteristically repudiates. Nonetheless, she fears the moving finger of a fate

that writes and moves on relentlessly, akin to Fugard's own conviction that "the passing of those seconds ... it's death knocking at the door. Seconds for me is literally the knock at the door."[15] Milly, despite her fundamentally healthy and optimistic outlook, feels threatened by Don's theories: "It's a subtraction sum. A taking away. More and more. Until you've had the lot and then you're dead" (People, p. 134). His doom and gloom intensify her sense of betrayal, of being shortchanged generally. The colloquial flow of her words floods the listener with the pent-up force of her resentment, anger, outrage and defiance. In a rare moment of self-pity and self-indulgence, she cries: "I'd rather do away with myself than carry on like this," a fleeting pessimism echoed in her despairing observation: "This is a hell of an end to my year. I won't scream, but I think I'm losing my hold" (People, p. 144). This suppressed and silent scream gives a cutting edge to her depression, which never mutates to hysteria. There is a compressed quality in her desperation, an urgency in her appeal for help to alleviate her suffering, to strengthen her wavering resolve, to eat, drink and be merry and to celebrate life.

Milly is a doughty fighter, a veteran campaigner in the battle of life, a metaphor Fugard sustains from the first sequence to the last when Don finally reminds her: "There aren't any trenches. This is Hospital Hill, Braamfontein" (People, p. 166). Milly is wounded and her vituperative rhetoric is directed against Ahlers, the unseen opponent. For her the lines are clearly drawn. Those who assist him are the enemy and those who support her are allies. Milly, unremittingly aggressive, is reluctant to declare a truce when

threatened by evil forces. It is not just her clash with Ahlers, her sparring with Shorty or her contest with Don, it is life itself that is the battleground: "Some nights when I lie in bed and those ambulances go screaming past and I think: More casualties! ... I can just about smell the cannon smoke" (People, p. 166). Milly's role of combatant is re-inforced through inter-action with Shorty, a lodger and devotee of boxing. Fugard exploits this dramatic metaphor and narrows the conflict area to the kitchen, which Milly defiantly states is not a boxing ring. When Milly puts on Shorty's boxing gloves, she externalises the aggression and tension within her. The scene distracts Milly successfully from Don's morose introspection; her pugnacious response to life's battering is to come out of her corner with gloves on literally and metaphorically. Her words, too, reveal her as a woman with spunk and spirit, hostile and hating but seldom vicious. In a review of the first Cape Town production, Robin Malan observed:

> She swings and wallops her way through the play. Having her play that long flailing tirade in the Second Act in boxing gloves is sheer genius: it was funny, sad, splendid--a complete marriage of the 'what' and the 'how.'[16]

Cast in a combatant role from the outset, Milly's cutting words, biting observations and aggressive mood are the weaponry of a survivor. Her strength of mind enables her to declare war on life, her fear of increased isolation, ageing and depression. Her rebellion against life's inequities is fuelled by resentment and desire for revenge. As she cogently observes to Don: "If you can't hit out once in a while, you might as well throw in the towel" (People, p. 110). Throughout her conversations with Don and Shorty, the leitmotif of violence is

discernible. She relishes the explosive sense and sounds of "And smote the bastard down!" (People, p. 110). Linking in rapid succession the words God, good and guts, she unconsciously presents an equation of values, reflecting her innermost conviction. Her vocabulary mirrors an inner aggression, a valuable component in her armoury, enabling her not merely to accept life's raw deal but also to adjust and go on from there. Milly refuses to go under irrespective of life's blows.

Her fighting temperament enables her to view life positively, to salvage what is worthwhile from her past and to face the future in a spirit of defiance. Her approach is creative; she works through problem areas and attempts to resolve difficulties and alleviate depression. This she does with a vigour and strength that is militant. Her passionate aggression has little to do with clenched fists or boxing gloves. Part of Milly's charisma is her ruthless autocracy, her resolve to smash her opponents. As a victim of alleged injustice, she asserts her rights as a woman and a human being. Milly would have made a superb suffragette. Not only does her oratory have a moral force and evangelistic power but she is also seriously concerned with the position of women, rejecting the notion that their prime function is to mother children within a patriarchal society. She reacts starkly to Ahler's Victorian view of women and his chauvinistic beliefs, traditional concepts Milly views as physical and psychological bondage. Pugnacious and belligerent, Milly engages in hostilities that reveal her as a rebel seeking a new dispensation. Her smouldering monologues are not delivered from a podium but in her kitchen, her arena of battle. The

kitchen, once a boxing ring and then a courtroom where Don and Shorty stood arraigned of crimes against humanity, is forever Milly's battleground. The birthday party becomes another fusillade to shoot down the enemy and her choice of words, amusing enough to titillate an audience, aptly places this scene within a battle context, it is her war on injustice and "life with a capital F": "It's on. Anybody who backs out now is a deserter. And at the front line you get shot for that" (People, p. 141). It is the culmination of all the verbal skirmishing around issues. Suddenly party pretence is over, restraints abandoned and hostilities laid bare. No-one is exempt from the psychological group therapy and consciousness-raising session. "Sometimes when I think of your hands I want to vomit" (People, p. 155), Milly cries, overwhelmed by the existential nausea that consistently afflicts her. Don retaliates, telling her she has old woman odours. In a stinging series of revelations, accusations and counter-accusations, they venomously enter the fray.

Milly is tormented by a sense of urgency, an imperative carpe diem. She stands at the crossroads of her mid-life crisis. Her rejection by Ahlers affects her personality. Her background, the genetic factors in her make-up, predisposes her to endure and survive, to hang on when the going is tough. Her father, Alfred Jenkins, whose Port Elizabeth name provides an interesting link with Fugard's home ground, was unimaginative but stolid. Milly focuses on hope, an inherent part of her personality, her positive response to harsh reality. Although time has eroded youthful dreams, she nostalgically attempts to rediscover her childhood dreams. Milly needs a helping hand to lift her from the emotional mire, to help her work through her

traumas and to accommodate to the new realities. With insight she dredges the dregs of her life, while Don coldly observes and analyses. She craves understanding and insight, manifesting a profound curiosity concerning the human condition. She cannot exist in a vacuum and needs to be acknowledged by others. In these respects she is a sister beneath the skin to Lena. They are kindred spirits in that not just their self-esteem but the validity of existence depends upon their interaction with others. "People are living there!" is Milly's cri de coeur (People, p. 168), reflecting her painful need to have the story of her life confirmed, "your image in the minds of other people, the recognition of yourself through others."[17] Despite pretended indifference, Milly waits expectantly for Don's bloodless and textbook scholarship.

Fugard's portrait of Milly accurately portrays a jilted woman struggling to survive trauma and to re-connect with life around her. She demonstrates her ability to endure and harnesses her resentment and anger for positive ends. On an emotional see-saw, with pain and depression counterbalancing her determination to "Laugh and sing and be happy" (People, p. 119), psychological and dramatic tension is generated. The party, fantasy game playing, is an escapist device and a last ditch attempt to infuse gaiety into her life. She teeters on the edge; her party is a dance macabre, a celebration in the face of calamity, "an abortive birthday party."[18] It is absurd, festive trappings devoid of spirit, an elaborate operation mounted to deceive Ahlers and to convince him that Milly can function effectively and happily without him. But it is a charade, an expensive and useless exercise, an elaborate game to conceal the cracks in her crumbling life. Aware of

life ebbing, she affirms bravely and boldly that "the best years are the middle years" (People, p. 146). Her 50th birthday party echoes the emptiness in her life, a tinsel ritual devoid of sparkle or joie de vivre. The birthday toast rings hollow, yet Milly succeeds momentarily in anaesthetizing the pain of existence. Blowing out the candles and plunging all into darkness is an amusing theatrical moment and a signal that light in her life is extinguished.

The contrast between Milly's bantering and lighthearted efforts at conviviality and the silent, voracious gobbling of her guests opens a yawning chasm between them, a rapid descent to "rock-bottom" where she can no longer dissemble. Forced to confront her confusion, to recognize her agony of spirit, the process of self-discovery is accelerated by Don, who pinpoints deficiencies and shortcomings. The interaction of Don, Milly and Shorty is acerbic, corrosive and acrimonious. The party is less the joyous camaraderie of celebrants than a dirge-like last supper, an association reinforced by scriptural reference and biblical phraseology: "I'll have him down here, on his knees, begging for mercy before the cock crows thrice. That's my vow. So help me God" (People, p. 141).

Don fulfils a vital function in Milly's life--he bears witness. Whether mute as Outa was, or articulate as Don is, their testimony validates the existence of Lena and Milly respectively. Their affirmation enables Fugard's women to transcend the human predicament, the passage of time and the lack of fulfilment. Don as scribe/scholar, like the playwright himself, must reduce the welter of chaotic experiences to a nucleus of order through the process of selection. He highlights certain events, bringing them into focus and

defining their importance. Don's obsession with his notes is comparable to Fugard's preoccupation with his role as playwright, refining the dross of existence into the gold of theatrical insights. "Work it out and let me know," Milly tells Don (People, p. 114), reinforcing his role as intellectual code-breaker, whose close proximity to his fellow human beings and superior intellect ensures intimate knowledge and understanding.

Vandenbroucke writes of Don's "emotional paralysis,"[19] an accurate description. Don's perspective is an academic one, he is a theorist whose concepts have a dry, empty and remote sound. As an interpreter, translating the actions of others into textbook jargon, he is a foil to Milly's flesh and blood imagery. His intellectual detachment provides an objective point of view. As a student of human nature, attempting to understand, to clarify and to record thoughts and perceptions, Don differs from Fugard in that he is uncritical of his work, even self-congratulatory, approving of his own knowledge and turn of phrase. "I put it to you that the heart of love throbs below the belt. Very good!" he states with smug satisfaction (People, p. 116). Distanced from the dilemmas of those he examines so coldly, his feelings, other than a fleeting sexual response to Sissy, are never engaged by those around him.

It is ironic that Don should perceive Shorty as the castrated male, for Fugard views Don himself in this light,[20] placing him in the same company as Johnnie, Boesman and Errol Philander, whose nightmare in Statements After An Arrest Under The Immorality Act defines the castration theme explicitly. For Fugard, these men play a passive even impotent role. Don is an effete Hamlet doomed to observation rather than

implementation. In Don's pronounced tendency to self-flagellation, Fugard has introduced a strongly autobiographical note. This self-portraiture, hardly disguised, together with the mirror image of himself as a boy in "Master Harold"...and the boys form a composite picture of the playwright in his youth.[21] In his Notebooks Fugard chronicled his personal perceptions of character and these provide background to the dramatis personae of People. His Notebooks provide raw material which generates ideas and dramatic concepts. They aided the creative process, providing reserves, insights and observations. But once the character took shape not merely in Fugard's mind but on stage, the biographical basis ceased to be of significance. Don must be assessed within the framework of the play rather than as an evocation of the artist as a young man.

Don Maclennan describes Don as "a terrified nihilist, a foil for Milly's desperate need to have the story of her life confirmed."[22] Milly's spirited revolt contrasts with Don's negativism, akin to a death wish. He desires to "sleep in peace," a phrase ominously reminiscent of requiescat in pace; by his own admission he is dumb, numb and devoid of protest. It is Don who implies that the kitchen, four walls and a lid is tomb-like (People, p. 167), where his instinct to return to the herd weakens, where he endures a living death. He pinpoints, however, an escape route, the door to the outside world. His staccato phrases are caustic and challenging. From the outset his traits of cynicism and pessimism are evident. He is prey to Sartrean anguish, a fashionable malaise among students. Well versed in contemporary philosophical jargon, he offers assessments and definitions. His smug superiority, academic

pose and lifeless theorising contrast with Milly's earthy realism. As a good listener, however, he accommodates Milly's verbosity, her need to communicate and speak freely. Finally, there is an element of reconciliation between them, as he compels her to laugh, the triumphant life-affirmative note with which the play ends.

With the entry of Shorty and, to a lesser degree, Sissy, Fugard explores areas of socio-political significance. In Shorty, Fugard delineates a poorly educated Afrikaner, whose white skin ensures him a measure of sheltered employment in the public service. If Shorty were black, he would have languished below the bread line. In apartheid society, however, job reservation effectively excluded blacks from certain areas of work, including menial positions in the civil service. The poor white problem bedevilled South Africa for some time and in 1932 the Carnegie Commission was critical that government relief had done nothing to restore a sense of initiative. In Johannesburg in the early thirties, the municipality fired black cleaners and took on whites.[23] The poor white, through economic necessity, gradually moved into work he had previously considered beneath him. The National Party was clearly established as the champion of the poor whites and in 1924 when Barry Herzog became South Africa's first Nationalist prime minister, one of his first measures was the "civilised labour" policy, the employment of "civilised" workers in preference to those termed "uncivilised." In other words, whites instead of blacks. As a result, large numbers of poor Afrikaners were absorbed into the public sector, particularly the railways. Job reservation was first advocated in 1937 by J. G. Strijdom, a future prime minister of South Africa. After the National-

ists came to power in 1948, this objective was achieved.[24]

Against this background, Don's comments to Shorty have added significance:

> Overseas you'd be a labourer--digging up the streets in London .... Here we have Natives to do the dirty work. You're saved by your white skin. Because examine the facts. You can just about read and write. You can't carry out the simple duties of a postman. I don't think you could do anything complicated. You blunder on from day to day with a weak defence--yet you survive (People, p. 154).

Sissy, Shorty's wife, also comes from a poor white background and her search for security focuses on Shorty, whom she mistakenly thought could give her the material possessions she desires. Her sadistic jibes at his inferiority highlight the socio-political issues. Reproaching him for his failure to be a good provider, she characterises him as a dim-witted postman, "a husband that don't even bring home the living what he's supposed to earn" (People, p. 111). Shorty is as much a casualty of life as is Milly. Both are fighters, Shorty in a literal sense and Milly figuratively.[25] Shorty's macho boxing contrasts with his inability to retaliate when Sissy attacks him, submitting meekly to her insults. Viewed from a dramatic perspective, his boxing serves to highlight the disparity between the inner and outer man, whereas Milly's sparring reflects accurately her urge to lash out at life's injustice and her impatience with those who resign themselves passively to their fate. In the light of her militant stance, Milly is appalled at Shorty's pathetic submission, his emasculation at the hands of Sissy. She would have opted for a violent resolution of their marital problems rather than the pathos of Shorty's pleas to a wife in name only, who ridicules, degrades and humiliates him publicly. "Why didn't you hit her? You're

a boxer. Why didn't you give her one good wallop?" (People, p. 112), Milly asks incredulously of Shorty. The altercation between Shorty and Sissy exposes their weaknesses and at the same time, through her undisguised disapproval, defines Milly's character even further.

Shorty and Sissy are aptly named. "Shorty" has a derisive sound, the appellation given by a taller world to one who fails to measure up to standards approved by society. This attitude may well have spurred him towards boxing, a superficial compensation for inner inadequacies of passivity and compliance. "Sissy" sums up their relationship, that of sister/brother rather than man/wife. In the first Afrikaans production of the play, Daar Leef Mense Daar, at Cape Town's Nico Malan Theatre in August 1982, Fugard, who directed the play, cast his daughter Lisa Maria as Sissy. Aside from being her professional début, it was arguably a role acceptable to a father, especially one aware of the Electra complex. Mel Gussow wrote: "I smiled and thought of his lovely daughter Lisa, a hopeful actress, and of her protective father shooing away boys as if they were nesting birds."[26] Sissy, although teasing and tantalising, remains untouched by Shorty, a technical virgin despite her marriage and her "friendship" with Billy. Sissy's brief appearance widens the scope of the action, and the response she triggers off in Shorty, Don and Milly propels the play forward, providing an entertaining divertissement and, through character interaction, deepening the audience's understanding of all four personalities on stage. With her departure, the focus narrows. Peter Stevenson observed accurately that without denying the importance of the parts of Sissy and Shorty, in the end the main two-handed

tussle was between Don and Milly, and that in the end it was Milly's play.[27]

Shorty and Sissy's conversation imparts an Afrikaans flavour to the dialogue. Stevenson observes: "once you get the accent and the rhythm, the writing comes even more to life."[28] It is the rhythm of human speech with the enriching dimension of regional intonation.

Milly's language mirrors her inner tension and suppressed conflicts."The fun, for God's sake!" she shouts (People, p. 148), violently yoking verbal opposites. Her vocabulary is that of an endangered character. In quick succession she uses words and phrases such as "disaster," "It's touch and go" and "So help me God."

Silkworms provide a central metaphor for change and potential beauty in life, comparable to the butterflies and moths in The Blood Knot, the symbols of transformation and mutation. Milly, located in a hostile universe, identifies with the moths that nobody wants. She is consumed by a sense of life's injustice, when value is placed on function and intrinsic worth is consequently denied. Ahlers' rejection of her as a menopausal woman unable to give him children wounds her deeply. The best therapy for her is a good time, which she obsessively views as the only redemption possible, an antidote to her wasted years. Don's cynicism is offset by her romanticism, a remarkable trait in a woman jilted after ten years by an indifferent lover. There is in Milly the belief that sometime, somewhere, she will find happiness and fulfilment, that she will experience a spiritual metamorphosis. Life has cruelly nailed her to a cross of suffering in a way which reminds us of Sissy sticking pins into Shorty's

silkworms.

Fugard's visual and dramatic imagery is evocative. Centre stage stands a woman in a dressing gown painting in alliterative and poetic language a picture of her untainted childhood in which all things were bright and beautiful; a little girl with faith in her heart, dressed in pristine white and listening to a tolling bell, the tongue of the church sounding joyously in her ears. It is a vivid and touching portrait of belief and hope, sanctified by faith. Breathless, exclamatory phrases punctuate her account, propelling her vision towards the goal of happiness, a contrast in literary style to the harsh present she sketches in words and lines of unrelenting finality and commonplace dreariness: "sausage," "function," "business," "stop" and "dead." Milly's recollections of childhood innocence are a summary and chronicle of expectations confounded by defeat and broken pledges. It is of little consolation to her to be in the company of fellow victims. The ebb and flow of hurts, resentments and disasters culminate in a monologue that says it all in human and dramatic terms (People, p. 157).

The bitterness is never unrelieved, however, for her mixed metaphors and poetic language distract the viewer and reader: "I can also put one and one together and get two evil-minded birds in the bush," she says with unconscious humour (People, p. 107). The comic effect is heightened by the contrast between her colloquial language and Don's professional jargon:

> Milly. And let me assure you that's the only lying down she lets him do when she's around. You heard him. When a woman is stingy that way then she's really stingy. Dammit all, old Shorty's entitled to it.
>
> Don. The aggressive female and the submissive male. The loss of male virility and the

> woman's rebellion. The neurosis of our time (People, p. 113).

The stage set in itself is an image of relationships between the characters. One door leads to the backyard and an outside room, where Don lives. The other door connects with the rest of the house. Don is therefore both physically and metaphorically outside the main arena of action, a position that reinforces his role as observer and catalyst. The door leading to the rest of the house is an opening to the past, Milly's past with her lodger, Ahlers, whom we never see but who generates acrimony and resentment in her. A window looking onto the street is an opening to the world outside from which Milly is separated by her angst, her anguish at lost years of youth, and her desire for revenge. The grandfather clock in the hall symbolises the passage of time with its intimations of mortality. Its erratic chimes stress dysfunction; for Milly time is out of joint. When the clock stops, she is filled with fear that her life, too, is at a standstill. Her physical attack on the clock is indicative of her need for fulfilment. As the chimes are an antidote to the oppressive silence in the house, the light she switches on is similarly an attempt to disperse the spiritual darkness around her. Noise as a leitmotif in the play, the noise we make "Lest they forget" (People, p. 167), is the noise of the living as opposed to the silence of the grave.

Don Maclennan notes that Fugard's women are familiar with pain and emptiness.[29] It is their capacity to accept their drab existence, to accommodate the dismal realities of their lives and to endure that constitutes their triumph. As Dennis Walder concludes, Milly is still alive and will survive.[30]

Milly's refusal "to accept the immutability of circumstances"[31] leads to self-assertion and a vindication of inherent human worth.

Statements After An Arrest Under The Immorality Act

Statements After An Arrest Under The Immorality Act was first published together with two workshop productions devised by Athol Fugard, John Kani and Winston Ntshona, Sizwe Bansi is Dead and The Island, primarily because Fugard was dependent on the method of challenge and response evolved with Orestes and common to all three published plays.

Statements was profoundly influenced by Peter Brook's The Empty Space, which coincided with Fugard's belief that the absence of elaborate props, putting over "Rough Theatre" without style, was not only acceptable to theatregoers but anti-pomp and anti-pretence.[32] It gave his actors a chance to come to terms with themselves and his words. The script that evolved during experimental sessions changed radically during performances at The Space, Cape Town, in May 1972. Later, with objectivity and perspective, allied to experience gained from producing the play at London's Royal Court Theatre in 1974 with Ben Kingsley as Errol Philander and Yvonne Bryceland as Frieda, Fugard virtually rewrote the play. Acting in the Cape Town production, he felt restrained by his acting role, unable to operate completely as the playwright. It was in London that he redressed the balance, assuming responsibility for the final text. Statements, viewed from a technical perspective, marks a transition from his creative encounters with actors (The Coat,

Orestes, Sizwe Bansi and The Island) to the dominance of the writer over his material. Categorically, one can state that the technique of challenge/response, actor/director ended with Statements. Fugard termed Statements his "bridge play,"[33] embodying as it did not only his relationship with actors in the rehearsal room but his ascendancy as writer dramatist. The scripts that evolved in Cape Town differed substantially from those shaped and dictated by the London rehearsals. The first performance of the play was prefaced by a long reading from Genesis. When Brian Astbury saw the London production he could not accept the change from "a concentrated, gritty, earthy poem full of anger and despair into a very beautiful, soft, lyric poem."[34]

Statements is a doomed love story rooted firmly in South Africa, a land of separated people living compartmentalised lives. Frieda Joubert's story is that of a white, lonely ageing spinster reaching out to another human being, who happens to be "coloured;" the universal yearning for togetherness, love as the anodyne for the pain of existence. In the South African context, however, that love becomes a guilt-ridden furtive experience, driven underground by repressive racial laws that dehumanize the protagonists and demean their emotions.

Love across the colour line is not new in South African literature. It is a common theme in white liberal literature generally and in the writings of certain black authors. Robert Kavanagh highlights the Black Consciousness Movement's rejection of such relationships between blacks and the "enemy," viewing them as exploitative, diversionary, immoral

and treasonable, a black woman being judged more harshly than a black man. He writes that the BCM attempted to expose to blacks all areas where their racial/cultural interests were threatened or damaged by the activities of the dominant white group. It was particularly aware of cultural domination and specifically rejected multi-racialism.[35]

Fugard works within different parameters. The external specifics of his story run parallel to his need to make a personal statement. Statements made by the three characters are complemented by the playwright's own sub-text to their dialogue, his deeply felt political anger. Fugard believes it is almost impossible to have meaningful literature that does not involve some form of social criticism and this attitude finds expression in varying degrees in his plays. In Statements he deals directly with the disruptive effect of the Immorality Act No. 23 of 1957 on his two characters, Frieda Joubert, a white librarian and Errol Philander, a coloured school principal.

Fugard states that it is almost impossible to tell a South African story that does not have a political resonance. His motives for choosing a story vary and change from play to play. Sometimes he is motivated by an "upfront political anger" and at other times by obscure personal matters.[36] Stephen Gray writes that Statements is an organised assault on a legal statute that maintains the Apartheid State, that "the political debate is never detachable from the whole environment out of which it arises."[37]

Statements is a play that cannot be read solely as a literary text; it must be seen for the poetry of its visual

imagery. The picture of two naked lovers is central to Fugard's play, its characterisation and construction. The visual element is a stimulus for Fugard's creativity: Sizwe Bansi was conceived in response to a photograph Fugard saw of a man with a cigarette in one hand and a pipe in the other. Likewise, in Statements, the photographs of the naked couple are the visual heart of the play. They suggest a turning point, a nightmarish intrusion of society, their flashes revealing the nudity of Errol and Frieda in stark black and white, the racial and ideological contrasts of South African society. The device of photographs, an image of an image, reality once removed from the crisis situation, represents the frozen viewpoint of the law and enables the playwright to distance himself from his material. As Fugard noted, these photographs were the essence of the experience he wanted to explore, the terror of those moments caught and frozen for all time by the camera; Fugard's naked truth that nothing lasts, that all human experience is mortal and therefore doomed.[38] It is significant that he wrote most of Statements while listening repeatedly to two requiems, Mozart's and Brahms'[39] which he viewed as celebrations of life and death, themes that pulsate through his play. Fugard walks the tight-rope of detachment, poised and balanced between his depiction of love and life on the one hand and emotional decline and death on the other.

Statements is a story within the South African context. That Errol is married adds the dimension of adultery to his affair with Frieda. But this is an external factor with little impact on the focal issue: their love is forbidden by the State.

In terms of the Immorality Act No. 23 of 1957, Frieda was guilty of "attempts to have unlawful carnal intercourse with a coloured male person;" "attempts to commit with a coloured male person any immoral or indecent act;" while Errol was guilty of these offences in relation to a white female person. In 1985 a joint committee of the three South African Houses of Parliament investigated the desirability of scrapping the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act and the sex across the colour bar clause, Section 16 of the Immorality Act. The Government's decision to repeal these laws represented a change in legal attitudes to sexual relations between the races in South Africa. Their removal from the statute books at the end of the 1985 parliamentary session meant that love or marriage across the colour line could take place without the humiliation of official prying and condemnation.

Statements, firmly set in one of the saddest periods of South African history, when lives were disrupted and ruined by laws recognised in South Africa today as iniquitous and degrading, unequivocally shows the havoc these laws wreaked in the lives of Errol and Frieda. It is their tragedy to live out their love in the menacing shadow of these laws. The repeal of such legislation does not invalidate the play or consign it to the scrap-heap of historical anachronisms. Dramatists have consistently portrayed characters rooted in local realities, oppressed by harsh laws and times. In the eyes of their contemporaries these plays record man's violation of the sanctity of human life and love. In so doing, the dramatist might serve as agent provocateur, promoting awareness and fostering change. In plays that work effectively in theatres throughout the western world, a universality emerges from

characters delineated within local situations, encountering problems generated by a particular place and a particular time. In South African theatre history, at the turn of the seventh decade of this century, works emerged dealing with the suffering of individuals as a result of prevailing social and racial conditions, with ideological conflicts traceable to the racial mix of the South African population. Charles Malan refers to the fated identification with "the tormented land at the southern tip of Africa. There are rage and rebellion against factors that ignore the kinship and stress the divisions between people," a microcosmic situation that reflects the fragmentation of the modern world. Dr Malan writes:

> Factors of colour, language and tradition now generally transcend a neurotic obsession with socio-political divisions to become a backdrop to the verbalisation of an intensely personal experience of differentiation and existential isolation.[40]

As Don Maclennan notes "South African fiction tunes in very subtly to the neuroses and truths of our time; it examines scrupulously the depths of being, and faces the possibility of a confrontation with nothingness and political and moral impotence."[41] What is significant is the response of readers and viewers beyond South African borders. British reviewers of the English translation of The Long Journey of Poppie Nongena by Elsa Joubert, felt the impact of the work at a level far deeper than the propagandistic. Sally Ramsay wrote:

> The most chilling message that the work as a whole conveys is that sensitivity, warmth and generosity cannot endure when faced with perpetual hardship. By the end of the book, Poppie's buoyant vitality has completely disappeared, despite her instinct for survival. She may insist that 'We take what comes our way and then we go on. But we don't give up;' yet the seeming optimism is all but negated by the

> mood of stoic resignation in which her narrative ends. Where we leave Poppie, after a lifetime of struggle, the real struggle is only just beginning.[42]

Because playwrights are affected by political events, art and politics can co-exist in the theatre. Four currently active playwrights, Athol Fugard, David Marmet, Arthur Miller and Wallace Shawn, met in 1986 at the invitation of the New York Times and agreed that despite the absence of strong public demand for plays dealing with political and social issues, this was their primary calling. Arthur Miller told New York theatre critic Mel Gussow that a play in the thirties could not be thought of as important if it did not refer in some way "to the political logjam." In the forties it was respectable for political themes to be in plays but "soon if you said the word political in relation to a play it meant it was not artistic, it was propaganda."[43] This might be a dilemma for the American writer but Fugard as a South African writer had other concerns, that of facing a converted audience, writing for people of like-minded opinion. "I sometimes think I'm in the business of playwriting in order to go through the process of educating myself," he stated. "It's the only demand for honesty in my life which is total and which I try to meet totally."[44]

In Statements Fugard focuses on the sufferings of Frieda and Errol, torment inflicted by the society of their time. He makes pertinent statements that differ in content, style and effect. Frieda and Errol's statements have much in common with the presentation of a subject or theme in a musical composition, whereas the policeman's statement is a declaration and allegation setting forth facts. In a sense, the word

"statements" also evokes the commercial concept of debit and credit between two parties, from which we infer that a price must be paid. Statements is dense with the ambiguity of these meanings. The musical flow of the woman's imagery with which the play opens, establishes a poetic mode that culminates in Philander's poignant verse. Fugard encapsules their relationship in a lyrical framework, their private retreat from the realities of a harsh environment. As the woman retreats into sensory impressions, she creates an idyllic picture, a Garden of Eden for an archetypal man and woman. Like Eve, she is a temptress ensnaring the man. Her name, Frieda, the Dutch and Afrikaans for "peace," reflects the nature of her being. The man, Errol Philander, has a fairly common coloured name, viewed by Cosmo Pieterse as part of "the allegory of naming."[45] His name summarises his adulterous lifestyle, a male flirt dangling after a woman in a trifling manner. Fugard extends this allegorical use of names to "Bontrug," the coloured township where Philander lives. Bont, Afrikaans for "confused," "varied" or/ suggests a background of impurity and mutilation, blighted in this instance by deprivation and drought, a harsh contrast to the amenities of the white Karoo village where Frieda lives. It is drought of a different kind, a cerebral thirst, that brings Errol to the library, an intellectual oasis in the Karoo desert, the only place where the narrow and constraining ideologies of his society do not hold sway. His desire for knowledge led him to a door opened by a woman with a hunger for emotional and sexual fulfilment, living in a sterile world of her own, an ageing spinster without a soul-mate or body-mate. Their needs coalesce and fuse, giving birth to a rewarding

relationship blighted by his adulterous guilt and doomed by the legislation they knowingly flout.

From the outset these Fugardian intimations of mortality suffuse the speeches of the man, reflecting the writer's creed that any human experience is mortal; that man's central dilemma is death. "One life is so much, and that is your chance to do it,"[46] said Fugard. The man tells the woman in unequivocal terms: "Because life lives, life must die."[47] His concept of life is placed within an evolutionary context. Although he focuses on his existence in a celebratory manner, rejoicing in his unique opportunity to live his life, he is preoccupied with the origin of life, the geological periods to be found in the Graaff Reinet district, the millenia of change leading to his time and life. Errol's obsession with Charles Lyell's Principles of Geology and Julian Huxley's Principles of Evolution and his repugnance for the anti-evolutionary Bishop Ussher, as well as the allusions to evolution and the origins of life, reveal Fugard's determination to use theatre to suggest primary drives of libidinal and destructive energy underlying social systems.

Dennis Walder argues that Errol is himself the product of an evolutionary process in the Cape. "The architects of apartheid seek to deny the people they themselves have brought into being," he states.[48] This is a sub-text in the play's opening sequence but there is a great deal more to Errol's consistent interest in evolution, which the writer of this thesis considers significant within the dramatic context of the play and an index to the playwright's inner intentions.

Lyell's Principles was the book Charles Darwin took with

him on his voyage around the world, a book he praised for its superior manner of treating geology. Lyell was an exponent of scientific evolutionary geology, which contrasted with the divine concept of the earth's creation. Darwin, who publicly acknowledged his debt to Lyell, produced an abstract of his own life's work in 1859, The Origin of the Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of the Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life. His most fervent supporter was Thomas Henry Huxley, whose grandson, Julian Huxley, wrote Principles of Evolution, the book Errol borrowed from Frieda.

In Origin of the Species Darwin explored the principle of reproduction, the central tenet of his theory of biological evolution. The central ideal in evolutionary philosophy is the world's state of flux. Lyell's geological science that looked on the earth as mobile and changing clashed with theology. Errol's fear of Bishop Ussher is fear of fundamentalism. Archbishop Ussher's chronology calculated from the biblical creation to the birth of Christ, whereas geological processes required millions of years. Jonathan Howard, in his book Darwin, maintains that the world picture which grew out of scientific evolutionary geology had no need for an imminent and interventionist deity; once the materials were available, the evolution of the cosmos and the earth within it could reasonably be assumed to have looked after itself. Errol's progressive mind rejected the creationism of orthodox religion for the mechanism of evolutionary change based on Darwin's principle of natural selection. Natural selection as an agency of adaptive change could never operate in an apartheid society that legislated against inter-colour sexual contact. Ironical-

ly, in Darwinian terms, this law might be viewed as the conscious decision of the breeder to intervene by means of selective breeding, a source of divergent evolution. The Immorality Act, constituting an effective barrier, leads to dissimilarity. Errol has moved from his position of isolation, thereby uniting two representatives of divergent groups, white and brown. Darwin firmly believed that cross-fertilisation had an important place in the theory of evolution; that sexual reproduction was a necessary condition for evolution by natural selection. It would have been reprehensible to the architects of the Immorality Act to accept Darwin's theory that two different living species were related by community of descent, cousins with a common ancestor. Although prohibition of sexual contact between the races as previously legislated in South African law was a phenomenon South Africa shared only with Nazi Germany, which outlawed sexual relationships between Jew and Gentile, Darwin in his Descent of Man (1871) pinpointed this belief in racial superiority: "Has not the white man, who has debased his nature by making slave of his fellow Black, often wished to consider him as other animals."[49]

The evolutionary creed so readily embraced by Errol runs counter to the segregated society in which he lives and in which he is regarded as an inferior and lower form of life. Separated by law, denied the socialisation so crucial to human evolution, Errol nonetheless sees himself as an integral link in the evolutionary chain, part of a process with "no vestige of a beginning and no prospect of an end," Lyell's geological evolutionary phrase that he repeatedly proclaims as his personal manifesto (Statements, p. 84). The great backdrop

sketched by Lyell, Darwin and Huxley gives him a feeling of personal worth denied to him by his socio-political environment: "it was a 'comprehension'--ja, of life and time ... and there in the middle of it ... at that precise moment ... in Bontrug, was me" (Statements, p. 84). It is a book on evolution by Julian Huxley, grandson of T. H. Huxley, that brings Errol to Frieda's door. The complexity of the evolutionary issue suffuses the opening sequence of Statements and enriches the texture of the writing, creating a pattern of ideas, as a dramatic backdrop against which the characters perform with heightened awareness of their position not only in their repressive society but also in the world and the cosmos. The action, localised and fraught with intensively regional conflicts bred in a particular place at a particular time, nonetheless suggests a wider evolutionary context. Through Errol's intellectual curiosity, the scope of the play broadens, encapsulating man and woman in evolutionary terms. The principle of flux and change runs counter to the apartheid structure, giving Errol new hope and vision. Fugard introduces the evolutionary theme plausibly and well. It is highly probable that a school principal would read widely and apply his research to the specifics of his own condition. It is not an empty academic exercise but a courageous pursuit of ideas antithetical to the Calvinist creationism of his oppressors. Finally, his studies promote a personal evolution in Errol, an unfolding of self, his development as an individual despite legal checks calculated to obstruct, suppress and stifle personal growth of this kind.

Frieda relies less on intellectual experience and reveals

the intuitive life-affirming orientation of Fugard's women. Her first memory of childhood was moving towards the sunlight and noise outside from which she was separated and excluded, as was Milly in People. Both Milly and Frieda attempt to join the happy throng out there. Walking through that door and locking it from the outside constitutes for Frieda a conscious rejection of a closed society, an outward move that ironically parallels Miss Helen's withdrawal into her own world. Milly, Frieda and Helen are sisters under the skin, eager to unlock the doors of the heart and mind to realms of new experience.

What is crucial in their lives and to their development is the moment of decision, the ability to recognise they are at crossroads, that life is not pre-ordained, that there is a turning point towards light and liberation should they but reach out to grasp fulfilment. Frieda not only turned her back on Cradock--one can surmise how dull and dreary her life was--but rejected the sexual conventions of rigid Afrikaner society. In forging a relationship with Errol, she could be under no illusions about her changed status in a small Afrikaner enclave. From respected custodian of their library, a relatively prestigious position, she would inevitably be viewed as an outcast, one who consciously defiled herself, contaminated by colour, a cardinal sin in Calvinist morality of that time. She is therefore a woman of courage and tenacity, seizing her chance in a sterile world, a destiny not only unconventional by prevailing social norms but also repellent, firmly placing her beyond the pale. In a difficult position fraught with risks of detection, condemnation, recrimination and punishment, Frieda is consciously and subconsciously aware

of negative currents swirling around her. In the image of two snakes killed while mating in her neighbour's backyard, the analogy is crystal clear: they, too, came into the open because of drought just as Errol left the literal and spiritual drought of Bontrug; and Frieda turned away from the crippling conventions of her society and the arid emotional wasteland of her life. Snakes generally provoke irrational fear in others and a violent response stemming from the instinct of self-preservation. Errol and Frieda threaten society in a like manner and inevitably suffer the consequences of an outraged morality; the presumption of man that he can legitimately destroy a God-created entity. Fugard, who witnessed the death of two copulating cobras, instantly correlated the splendour of their love-making and senseless slaughter with the relationship of Errol and Frieda and the destruction wreaked by society; an experience demarcated by the first and last photographs taken of them by the police, "twenty seconds of Hell which start with them together and end with them irrevocably apart; the twenty seconds that it takes to pass from an experience of life to an intimation of death."[50] The tension between life and death, a living relationship killed by a deadly law that purports to be a law against "immorality," is captured in the rhythmic beauty of two snakes copulating then writhing in their death agony. The imagery is powerful, relevant and effective. It heightens awareness and tension, creating as it does a foreboding of doom. It relates intimately to the play's characters and reveals Fugard as the dramatist to whom imagery is a pivot of his work particularly the later works of the mature artist. The imagery succinctly encapsulates themes of copulation and

death; and the play celebrates both these major themes. In dealing with a taboo viewed by a particular society at a particular time as sacrilegious and blasphemous, Fugard counterbalances the pornography of the Immorality Act with the consecration of his own Sex Act. Fugard's perspective, evident in Frieda and Errol's transient but intense pleasure, contrasts with a "guilt-ridden inversion of the celebration of the erect penis and moist vagina."[51] He depicts with sympathy and warmth the joyous, innocent and sadly transient nature of the love relationship, yet projects it as seriously flawed not only by the adultery component but by the omnipresent threat of police intrusion into a private world. Miraculously, against great odds and erosive pressures, the couple succeed in creating warmth and love. It is a fragile entity kept under wraps, hidden in the dark from prying eyes. That their feelings can mature within the oppressive almost claustrophobic prison in which they necessarily confine themselves is a measure of their mutual need, attachment and desperation. Two relatively ordinary people are subjected to trials of love in the heroic mould; their contravention of government decrees and their disregard of societal pressures requires courage and belief in the validity of what they share. They are two sensitive characters with genuine love for each other, bound together in an insecure and far from inviolable world, a Fugardian mixture of sentiment and sociology. Elsa Joubert commented that searching for each other is perhaps the most poignant aspect of the play, the breakthrough of two people from different worlds.[52] Errol's innocent games are revelatory, a technique to pry his world apart, to reveal the essence of his situation

and his inner desperation; games that pare away civilized layers of creature comforts and companionship. The game induces mental paralysis in the woman, whereas the man is still capable of hope. It is a game in which he has the upper hand. Knowing deprivation, he aspires to material security. His prayer, "Give us this day our daily bread" (Statements, p. 88), hints at the needs of a man struggling to maintain a decent standard of living; whereas Frieda's "Forgive us our trespasses" (Statements, p. 88), highlights her longing for release from persecution. Through transference she endures the guilt imposed on her by society. Errol plays an existential game that brings him and Frieda face to face with inner realities. What emerges is her tragic concept of guilt and alienation, a sense of not being at home in the world. Errol, concerned with the world, adopts a pragmatic attitude to existence. As John Macquarrie points out, a minimal level of having is necessary before there can be a truly human life with any dignity and independence.[53] Coming from Bontrug, with its housing and water shortages, Errol knows that deprivation dehumanizes mankind. His game with Frieda leads to analysis within a critical situation and their reflections disclose what lies beyond their narrow confines. Both are aware of their situations and have their personal vision of being. Errol insists he would eat stale cakes and "be sick," a primary ontological response. He, too, is ill at ease in the world, which threatens him. He has an overwhelming feeling of isolation. Through the game he exposes his craving for better aspects of life and living: "I'm hungry enough to make every mistake," he tells Frieda (Statements, p. 88). This hunger has

spiritual potential. Living within a restricted world, his relationship with Frieda threatens the little he has. They could lose their jobs, while the possibility of surveillance, house searches, police interrogation and arrest lead to permanent existential anxiety. Errol craves a different world order, "a real chance to start again," the potential denied him by repressive laws and ideology of the apartheid regime. The angst of Frieda and Errol is the nucleus around which Fugard constructs his play. He has chosen circumstances of relevance to a South African audience, yet they speak of ideological repression to audiences everywhere.

Despite conflicts and tensions, Frieda and Errol desire to surmount destructive obstacles. As Macquarrie points out, despair is a difficult stopping place.[54] Errol and Frieda believe they can pass beyond it to partial salvation. Their use of biblical language, the Lord's prayer, indicates their desire to overcome alienation with wholeness and authentic selfhood. From an audience's viewpoint, it is ironic that they invoke divine grace as absolution for a "sin" defined by a society that is itself inherently evil. The couple crave deliverance from evil, the unspoken phrase of the prayer in their minds. The society in which they live denies them purity of heart and existential integrity.

In Errol, Fugard creates a portrait of a man crippled by society yet attempting to stand straight and walk tall. He is a second-class citizen relegated to a coloured ghetto, its sterility conveyed by the absence of life-giving water. Fugard feels as strongly as Errol about water. "It's between God and me," he told Mel Gussow.[55] "If I've got to buy water, You've

[God] let me down." In A Lesson from Aloes the drought defeated Piet and yet something managed to flower. In Statements, Errol's relationship with Frieda is the flower that miraculously blooms in the dusty, dry landscape of Graaff Reinet and in the arid hearts of men. Smarting under racial inequality ("Pride doesn't use back doors!" [Statements, p. 90]), areas of pain debated frequently with Frieda, Errol reveals the psychological deformities inflicted on him. "I feel so buggered-up inside," he tells her (Statements, p. 90). There is no escape from the rigours of his existence. That he is a creature of the night, secretly moving between the coloured and white worlds, from Bontrug to Afrikaner hamlet, from coloured wife to white lover, is bound up with his brown colour, neither white nor black, a no-man's-land between two ideological entities, "where the tar and the light ends, where the stones start," straddling two worlds (Statements, pp. 90-91). Inwardly, he cannot shake off allegiance to his people, identification with their problems and reluctance to claim for himself those privileges denied them. He presents a complex picture of aspirations to a better life yet shackled to the destiny of his people. "The reason I don't want your water is just because Bontrug is thirsty," he tells Frieda (Statements, p. 91). Ironically, this identification with his people is partly responsible for his poor self-image, for he cannot divorce himself from the dregs of his society. On the one hand there is a sacrificial, Christ-like acceptance of the meanest and poorest of his brothers, on the other hand there is a masochistic desire to confront her with ugly realities in his background. His self-abasement and flagellation is excessive.

It reflects his confusion of race with class. His education and lifestyle set him apart from alcoholic vagrants with whom he falsely identifies. His sense of their inferiority impinges disadvantageously on his own self-worth, demonstrating the power of prejudice conceived by the white man in South Africa and subscribed to by the victim. Regrettably, Errol is conditioned by society to believe in his inferior status. He has partially succumbed to societal pressures and presents a stereotypical coloured face to the world. There are elements of defeat and victory in his confused attitude to Frieda and what her acceptance of him signifies in his life. Their relationship is one of uplifting love, as well as a bond that denies and negates his allegiance to a different world. He contends with conflict on different levels: the guilt of the adulterer who hurts his innocent family; the alienation of a man with a foot in the white world and a foot in the black world; and the fear of the offender who contravenes the law however iniquitous that law might be. Frieda's area of conflict is more concentrated, the inter-racial aspect and legal parameters within which the drama unfolds, a framework that generates personal tensions and emotional pressures. Adultery is not her problem. She would be prepared to trade her white privilege for a stable relationship. She recognises the mutual torment in their love and the fear their forbidden friendship engenders. A love that enhances and warms their lives is at the same time a canker with potential to maim and destroy. It is a life and death force. Their dialogue successfully establishes the texture of their relationship, its strengths and weaknesses. There is a paring to the bone, an

attempt to confront the complexity of their situation in terms of existential specifics and to convey at the same time the simplicity of their emotional interactions.

With the entry of the policeman, detective sergeant J. du Preez, the structure of the play changes. It becomes episodic, fragmented, punctuated by camera flashes and torchlight that form a nightmarish sub-text to the reality of their lives. It is a challenging format and a tribute to Fugard's art that he fleshes it out and makes it work theatrically. Technically the ensuing scenes have a staccato rhythm, with frequent breaks, altercations, confessional discourses and philosophical reverie. The variety of stage and writing techniques led Stephen Gray to comment on the African quality of the presentation, African modes of narrative contained within the bounds of western orthodoxy, semi-organised talk replacing western story-telling devices.[56] Fugard revised his first conception of the play which initially included two policemen, one reading a statement and the other at a typewriter. Originally much of the action took place in a police station, with repetitive camera flashes in the final scene. To begin with Fugard conceived a straightforward chronological narrative, the policemen dictating and typing the first statement; the teacher brought in for the second statement; the woman giving the third and final statement. He planned to use the typewriter as a dramatic device, its clatter and bell deepening the sound score of human voices protesting, crying, jabbering and talking and its sudden cessation accenting interior monologues.[57] After the first performances of the play at The Space in Cape Town in 1972, he decided that two

policemen were redundant if not confusing.[58] He determined to reduce the police statements to a programme note but later re-explored ideas for a police presence in the play. Arrangements of the play fluctuated and Fugard retained complicated sequences from the original Cape Town production. By the time Fugard produced the play at the Royal Court two years later in 1974, it had tightened into a cohesive dramatic entity. Despite improvements and changes, several critics viewing the English production found the love and courtroom scenes clumsy and "looselimbed"[59] and the message of the work "somewhat confused."[60]

Fugard's criterion was what a living audience got from a living performance on one particular night, sanctifying the active role and contribution of the actors rather than consecrating the text. At the Royal Court he gave his actors a chance to come to terms with their characters and words. If the resulting play appeared confused to some, it mirrored the confusion of characters lost in a legislative maze. Fugard once again is bearing witness to his time and his country. The terminology of the policeman, who dictates his statement to the audience--a technique that draws them inexorably into the action--teems with racial classifications: Errol Philander, Coloured; Frieda Joubert, European; charge, Immorality Act. He is their instrument of torture, empowered to arrest and interrogate the victims of this law; the representative of a state police force. The focus is on the statement of Mrs Buys, his own and those of Errol and Frieda. The personality of the policeman never intrudes and never distracts the viewer from the central drama, the martyrdom of the miscegenators. The

system of informers, society's righteous spies, is laid bare. Mrs Buys' report that prompted police intervention/investigation is a portrait of a huntress meticulously and patiently stalking her prey. It assumes a sinister aspect when viewed within the context of the law, punishment and social ostracism. Belief that the Immorality Act is right and just and its contravention criminal, is clearly demonstrated in the activities of a woman so corrupted by racism that she potentially destroys her neighbour, a neighbour biblical teaching enjoins her to love. She stigmatizes Errol and Frieda as immoral and therefore she is duty bound to report them and morally obliged to do so. In Mrs Buys we see the fabric of society rent by suspicion and intolerance. The weight of her evidence and that of the policeman dehumanizes Errol and Frieda, reducing them in status to lawless felons. The intrusion of the State into their private world, although half anticipated, shocks Errol and Frieda profoundly. Fugard lays bare a relationship bred in dark and secret places.

It is no paradox that their immediate environment is a library, an enlightened realm of the mind capable of sustaining a love deemed illicit by the repressive regime outside. The entry of the police is a crisis point in their relationship. Without clothes, they are revealed in the naked truth of their liaison. Theatre critic Robert Cushman, who reviewed the 1974 Royal Court production, saw their naked bodies as powerful statements eloquent of passion and shame, an indelible image of lovers frozen in terror attempting to protect themselves with clothes and blankets.[61] It is an essentially Fugardian technique, so reminiscent of Bertolt Brecht, the use of visual

imagery that imprints itself forever on the retina. Both Fugard and Brecht have this capacity in common, the ability to create a sequence that demands to be seen rather than heard in the theatre. It is the image that haunts the theatre-goer and remains a central focus of any analysis. One cannot review any production of Mother Courage and Her Children by Brecht without recalling the seminal image of a woman pulling a wagon. Fugard admired Brecht greatly, "someone who I always say will finally catch up on me in terms of what I may be doing as a writer."[62] Brecht's Mother Courage is ironically named, for she is a coward in need of courage to continue, to exist. The courage is there inside her when she looks for it. "A human being, she has human resources," wrote Eric Bentley.[63]

In the same way, Frieda, whose peace is shattered by the world around her, has to find an inner peace. There is a Brechtian intensity to the spectacle of Frieda and Errol fumbling with blankets and clothes to hide their nudity. Brecht believed that theatre led an audience towards understanding the society in which it lived, teaching it about the process of change.[64] There was no fourth wall between actors and audience. In the same way, the bright lights focused on Frieda and Errol compel an audience to take stock and re-adjust their values. Scrambling for clothes and cover, Errol and Frieda present "a rich compound of images."[65] All is revealed in the harsh glare. There is a reduction to essentials, a baring of flesh and of soul that disturbs the viewer. In Peter Brook's terms, it is "Rough Theatre"[66] that compels society to confront its hypocrisies, "the living presence of an actor in space and silence."[67] Errol attempts to

clothe his naked psyche with the school principal's mantle of respectability, a futile exercise in the eyes of an apartheid society ready to condemn but not condone. It is Frieda who attempts to restore order, focusing on concrete details in her effort to create a semblance of normality; "tennis biscuits" and "tea at four" (Statements, pp. 96-97) are the trivia that constitute everyday life for everyday people. Latching on to minutiae is an attempt at sanity in an apparently crazy collapse of order. Her lengthy soliloquy conveys the meaningless tenour of her provincial life before her affair with Errol, a dull aching nothingness that mocked the empty passage of time. There is a clock in the library, a Fugardian memento mori of which she, like Milly in People, is dismally aware. Her monologue reveals dark despair, loneliness, inability to connect with another human being and overwhelming fear of her hopeless situation. Fugard's stage directions are clear indicators of the changing pattern of mood and feeling, her gradual disintegration under pressure, movement from bewilderment and anxiety to loss of control and hysteria, all against the backdrop of his "grotesque parody of the servile, cringing 'Coloured'" (Statements, p. 99), a humiliating stereotypical picture that negates their former equality. In Errol's hands it is a double-edged sword. Designed to defuse a situation, to conciliate the white policeman and to indicate that he knows his place in the apartheid hierarchy, it destroys his belief in himself and he is reduced to a servile level. Technically, it is carefully constructed, sliding slowly and relentlessly from cohesion to chaos. Throughout his disjointed and rambling dialogue, he conveys his destitute physical and

spiritual condition. "There's no water left in Bontrug!" he cries (Statements, p. 99). It is not only the water of life he alludes to but the holy water of redemption absolving man from original sin; the water of baptism heralding a new order of innocence denied to those in Bontrug. His "performance," designed to placate the policeman, disturbs and distresses Frieda.

Again ensnared in the harsh glare of flash and torch light, their desolation and despair laid bare, they are trapped for all to see. Their mental torture is an agent of change, stripping away superficial identities and effecting a metamorphosis. She views him with compassion, focusing on his feet, as if their movement signifies a religious pilgrimage of a Christ-like figure about to be crucified by society: "Dust on his shoes. Him. His feet. His thoughts. A man ... walking, from Bontrug to here, the town, to me ... and then back again" (Statements, p. 100). There is, too, a sense of expurgated guilt, as if contact with the man absolves her from sin. Her words and thoughts resonate with biblical significance. Just as Christ exorcised demons from Mary Magdalene[68] so their relationship cures her of a moral illness, apartheid. On her own admission she saw no further than the racial category "coloured man" when he first came to the back door of the library (Statements, p. 100). Their relationship evolves gradually, mirroring his interest in evolutionary principles. Prolonged contact weaves a cocoon of friendship, sex and love and their relationship offers temporary and illusory protection from malevolent outside influences. Oblivious to the lights, she appraises her body, with child-

like lyricism, evading harsh reality: "My favourite colour is blue .... / My favourite flower is ..." (Statements, p. 102).

A series of invasive questions jolts her and the audience, the trauma intensified by contrasting literary conventions. Her expansiveness evaporates and monosyllabic, clipped answers serve as defensive shutters to exclude prying. The probing stirs confessions that Fugard heightens with painful pauses, abrupt phrasing and halting delivery. It heralds a further breakdown, accentuated by renewed exposure to torchlight, merging into "harsh, directionless, white light" (Statements, p. 104).

As Fugard states in his stage directions, the image is suggestive of a photograph, documentation of their "crime," incontrovertible evidence that they were caught in the act, in flagrante delicto. The audience grasps the true nature of the fevered responses of the man and woman, an interior stream-of-consciousness designed to reveal their emotional turmoil. Their arrest prompts a taciturnity broken only by curt, abbreviated replies. At this point the dramatist discloses his true terrain, the "intuitively apprehended" psychological realities of his characters,[69] a territory inaccessible to the policeman but shown in all its turbulence to the audience. Two dimensions mesh and merge, the concrete specifics of the external situation and the domain of their hearts and minds. The woman's peroration is a cogent summary of her situation, her total isolation, her sense of irretrievable loss, and her pain. It is, however, the man's final monologue that moves the play with certitude to an area hinted at previously, the realm of poetry. One is reminded here of Wilfred Owen's line: "The

Poetry is in the pity."[70] The man's address is an elegiac coda of emasculated man, a man who "affirmed himself in defiance of the white father-figure"[71] and is punished by castration. "I can't love," Philander states pitifully, attempting to grasp the reality of his eunuch state, a nightmare of deformity and mutilation. It is an affecting litany addressed to an audience and a God who, in the interests of the white man, has betrayed a human being made in his image, an image defiled by castration. Reality and unreality fuse in a nightmare informed with emptiness and intimations of death.

Statements, concerned with the question of state and police power over the lives of individuals, never adopts a propagandistic stance. Frieda's voice, an echo of Fugard's, is the democratic sound of her time. She is caught in a life/death struggle, not polemics. She and Philander grow in stature, searching their hearts and souls to find reserves of strength equal to the challenge posed by racist and destructive laws.

Frieda retains her identity in the vortex of pain, whereas Philander succumbs to events. Both tragically diminished by the abrupt invasion of their world, they react and respond in different ways. Once again it is Fugard's woman who, despite the loss, the deprivation of love and the cruel exposure, holds on: "I must be my hands again, my eyes, my ears ... all of me but now without you" (Statements, p. 105).

In speaking out against the laws of a ruling group, Fugard tells the ugly truth in his own way, his material shaped by the dramatist's insights and art. The play is an example of consciousness-raising theatre and succeeds in that way, yet it

has wider implications for those discriminated against in repressive societies everywhere. Today, with the Immorality Act consigned to legislative oblivion in South Africa, the play still projects vitality and concern. Fugard never harangues his audience with polemical arguments. Instead, he develops an emotional relationship that is warm and genuine. Repealing the Immorality Act has not made this play redundant primarily because Fugard focuses on true relationships rather than arguments and information. In a sense, he is an ultra-realist as defined by Menan du Plessis:

> I'd describe ultra-realism as a literary mode which does not merely take an immediate historical reality for its subject but which is in some sense directly penetrated by history, and which occasionally aspires to penetrate history itself.
>
> It is a mode which can accommodate not only the oblique literary technique of the allegory, but also of protest poetry, the frankly didactic and documentary style of the Staffrider school, and no doubt even the clear and singing rhetoric of the political pamphlet.[72]

For years the South African government attempted to control private sexual activity between consenting adults of different racial groups. The Immorality Act was rigidly enforced. In 1985 the view of miscegenation as a crime became irrelevant. Sexual activity across the colour bar became a quintessentially private matter, an intimate association beyond the reach of state regulation. Fugard did not manipulate his material or button-hole his audience to effect changes in the law. That his depiction of human suffering conceivably accelerated ideological change, resulting in the law being expunged from the statute book, is peripheral to an evaluation of the play's dramatic worth. It remains a moving human document, the work of a dramatist not a social reformer.

Statements is neither propagandist nor agitative. Nor is it protest theatre of a straightforward kind. For Fugard cannot touch a theme without alchemising it with his own theatrical flair. It becomes more than a didactic or polemical work, it becomes a human drama of two lonely people enmeshed in a web of evil legislation that circumscribes / their emotional needs and their actions. They are hemmed in not only by the unrelenting prejudice of their neighbours, as Miss Helen was by the people of New Bethesda, but also by gazetted laws designed to keep people of different colour apart, to prevent miscegenation. Their personal drama is encapsulated in this larger issue that impinges with crushing finality on their sexual and personal relationship. They are reduced to black and white components in a society with a rigid colour division, where crossing the great divide is not only a contravention of social codes but an offence punishable by law with imprisonment. Fugard fuses with great success the inner and outer structures of his play, the fermenting stress of the protagonists and the repressive surveillance of society, creating an untenable situation and a psychological tension that cannot be sustained.

The Road to Mecca

The Road to Mecca,[73] written in 1984, had its world première directed by the playwright in the Yale Repertory Theatre, New Haven, Connecticut, that same year. In contrast to Fugard's earlier work, Mecca is only peripherally about apartheid. And unlike the racially explosive Sizwe Bansi and

The Blood Knot, it hinges on the relationship between two white women, an ageing sculptress, Helen and her young British friend, Elsa. The story of the play was based on much publicised fact. Sunday newspapers in South Africa ran numerous features on a sculptress in New Bethesda, a small Karoo village, who was misunderstood by the villagers and who finally committed suicide. "Miss Helen's fantasies keep dorp alive" was the banner headline that greeted readers of the Sunday Times 28 March 1982. Reporter Bevis Fairbrother wrote: "a bizarre inheritance from an old hermit who committed suicide in an agonising way is keeping a small Karoo dorp alive." He went on to state that Nieu Bethesda, with a fixed population of only 35 whites, would almost certainly die without the hermit's mystical, shining "owl house" and weird collection of cement sculptures. He reported that Mrs Helen Elizabeth Martins, or "Miss Helen" died in 1976 after drinking a mixture of caustic soda and oil. She left behind a 100-year-old owl house with walls, door frames, windows and ceilings covered with finely-ground glass and 200 statues of animals, sphinxes and naked men and women in strange, symbolic groups. Nobody knew much about Miss Helen in her latter years, as she had locked herself away when her father died about 40 years previously. She rarely left the house or received visitors. Fairbrother noted:

> She lived off a pension and could be seen, bedraggled and barefoot, working on her statues in the dusty backyard, protected by a stone wall and towering fences of chicken wire. She was born in the owl house and, in her earlier years, was a teacher and a waitress in Cape Town and Port Elizabeth. Her marriage broke up and she moved back to the owl house, where she nursed her parents until they died.

In his report, he interviewed the town clerk who said Miss Helen did not even collect her pension herself:

> I don't think her childhood was too pleasant and she also had a tough time looking after her father. He liked darkness--and the room he lived in was painted black at his request! It was believed this was Miss Helen's reason for the fine glass on the walls.

Don Maclennan, playwright and lecturer in English at Rhodes University, has written a short story entitled The Road to Mecca.[74] There are marked similarities between his story and Fugard's play. Like Fugard's Miss Helen, his artist, Zelda Thomas, is small, delicate and bird-like. The community, from whom she has voluntarily withdrawn, feels a measure of responsibility for her. There is, too, misunderstanding and suspicion of her sculptures, all facing east. The minister was ignorant of the true meanings of her work and the villagers thought she was in the grip of a vision of the Holy Land until they read that her inspiration was Omar Khayyam. Children threw rocks at her art work, damaging them. To safeguard her work she created owls, "staring into your soul, like real owls do. They were set like watchdogs everywhere."[75] Her naked mermaids shocked the villagers. The inside walls of her house were covered with particles of finely-crushed glass, and the walls were painted with stripes and oblongs in bright colours. Miss Thomas, like Miss Helen, writes a despairing letter to a friend, a confidante from the Sunday Times: "I would have loved to have completed my famous Mecca," she wrote. But she had run out of space. Maclennan concluded his story with the reflection that Zelda was an artist in the wilderness:

> I could see we had been intolerant and insensitive, but I also think that there was nothing else we could have done, even knowing what fire burned inside Zelda's heart.[76]

Fugard, who produced Maclennan's play, The Third Degree, in Grahamstown in 1967, probably read this short story. Aside from corresponding descriptions, the title of both short story and play are the same, indicating Fugard's knowledge of the former. The Fugards bought a house in New Bethesda and he heard about Miss Helen from the townsfolk, saw her home and even saw her in her garden. Despite the derivative nature of many of his observations and characterisations, he has made this work his own. It bears the stamp of Fugard's craftsmanship, his experience as theatre technician, actor and director; while the deep philosophical nature of the play reflects an exploration of issues with which he has been preoccupied for a long period of time, the role of women in society, their submission and rebellion, their assertiveness and affirmation of life, their triumph in the face of adversity.

A new theme surfaces in this play, female bonding, a woman seeking primary support through a true friendship with another woman, a strong friendship based on complementary natures, the resulting bond viewed as a salutary and creative force. In Elsa's relationship with Miss Helen, the play's central figure, Fugard encapsulates a contemporary cultural phenomenon, yet as archetypal as the biblical saga of Ruth and Naomi. It has come into focus with the twentieth century feminist liberation movement, the supportive networking of women, an alliance that strengthens their position in an otherwise antagonistic environment. Fugard breaks new ground with this delineation of sorority, two women united in a common purpose. Their friendship is the basis on which Fugard constructs the play.

It is the coming together of two separate and lonely persons who combine to withstand adversity in its many guises.

The play is a three-hander: Miss Helen; her British friend, Elsa Barlow; and the pastor, Dominee Marius Byleveld. The magical set effectively becomes a fourth character, a design challenge for any director. A fifth character, referred to but never seen is Patience, the African woman given a lift by Elsa and who bears a striking resemblance to Lena in Boesman and Lena. Her presence resonates powerfully through the play and the implications of this for other characters will be examined in detail later in this chapter. Having stated that the play is based on a true story, that the title is derived from Maclennan's short story, that thematically Fugard investigates among other issues the major theme of creativity, it must be made clear that the playwright has moved with this work towards a dynamic resolution of issues that surfaced in previous plays. This play is by a mature Fugard and his spiritual and intellectual strength is evident in the themes and their treatment. Calvinism was viewed harshly in Hello and Goodbye, Hester cringing under its rigidity and inflexibility. Marius Byleveld, the Afrikaans pastor, is cast in a different mould, at the same time tough and sympathetic, a difficult blend.

The title succinctly reflects the movement of the play ideologically, the thrust towards a mystical truth, a journey of the spirit towards a supremely sacred place to which one aspires all one's life. The journey is not specifically linked with the religious system of the Moslem world, or with Mecca's importance as the birthplace of Mohammed. It is the pilgrimage

of the artist, just as John Bunyan's Christian undertakes a religious journey in Pilgrim's Progress, leaving the city of destruction for the celestial palace, where he finds eternal life and peace, the presence of God, clothed with immortality. Significantly, Christian's journey was borne with Patience, the name of the African woman in Mecca. Through the Valley of Humiliation (children throwing stones at Helen) and a darker valley still, the Valley of the Shadow of Death (her suicidal thoughts), Miss Helen finds in Elsa a staunch friend, just as Christian found Faithful, his friend and neighbour. The pilgrims, both Fugard's and Bunyan's meet Despair in different guises, including that of suicide, who appears to be able to free them from suffering. Turning away from Despair, they continue their journey until they come to the dazzling walls of the golden city.

Viewed in this light, Mecca becomes a modern parable of a writer demonstrating that the conscience and imagination of an artist threatens any society based on conformity and oppression, and revealing the dark night of the artist's soul en route to the celestial city, the light of revelations, the apocalyptic vision.

For above all, Miss Helen is a visionary. In September 1983, Fugard wrote in his Notebooks:

> I realise now there is no avoiding it--which will make Miss Helen the first exceptionally gifted (artistic, creative) character I've ever tried to deal with. No question though about my reluctance and hesitancy in coming to terms with her as an artist. I think that reluctance is now a thing of the past ... possibly because I think I've found a way to deal with her creativity without destroying its mystery. My Helen keeps company with Emily Dickinson.[77]

It is the mystery of the creative focus, the secret workings of the artistic mind, the withdrawal from the world into the inner sanctum of creativity that engages Fugard in the play. His investigation of the creative process constitutes a personal statement. In an interview,[78] Fugard stated that in taking on an authentic artist as subject, he drew on his understanding of his own creative energy. At that level there is a personal Fugardian investment in Miss Helen. Fugard tries in this play to deal with the loss of creativity, a fact all artists fear. Viewed in this light, the verse by Emily Dickinson used by Fugard as a foreword becomes a significant preface to the play:

> The soul selects her own society
> Then shuts the door
> On her divine majority
> Obtrude no more.

But the world does obtrude and it is the nature of this intrusion that constitutes the substance of the play.

Fugard's attachment to the South African scene percolates through at every level, from Elsa's concession that the Great Karoo has vast space, emptiness, and awesome silence (Mecca, p. 21), to Marius' unabashed paean of praise for the land that sustains him. Elsa, without African roots, is nonetheless susceptible to the beauty of Africa that generates for the Afrikaner a concept of an omnipotent God. As Fugard stated, "There is a hell of a lot of me in that."[79] Dominee Marius embodies aspects of Fugard, his celebratory relationship with the South African environment, his deep-rooted love of the earth, the valley in which he lives and its people. Even the regrettable aspects of Marius' outlook were drawn from Fugard.

"For all my much vaunted emancipation, I now realise I'm actually a Calvinist at heart. I remain a Calvinist," he said.[80]

Elsa, who is British, does not share the Calvinist Afrikaner experience Miss Helen and the dominee have in common. Elsa's viewpoint is detached and objective. Stunned by Helen's revelation that the dominee and church council wish to commit her to an old people's home, Elsa lashes out at Afrikaner hypocrisy, an issue central to Fugard's identity as a writer born of an Afrikaans mother and an English-speaking father. The polarised English/Afrikaans axis is presented and explored in Elsa and Marius. Despite their diametrically opposed views, both are presented sympathetically. Marius, as a Calvinist, views Miss Helen's Mecca as an anti-Christian phenomenon bordering on idolatry. "He's been waiting a long time for me to reach the end of my Mecca," Miss Helen confides to Elsa (Mecca, p. 46). Miss Helen had a "secret" of happiness that sustained her, the happiness of artistic creation. The death of artistic inspiration that generates suicidal despair in Helen gives Marius the opening he desires to reclaim her. On entering the house his first words, "Alone in the dark?" resonate through the dramatic metaphor Fugard so painstakingly constructed in the first act. Seen from the dominee's perspective, it is time to seek the light of the Church. Miss Helen's artistic fervour, her anti-establishment images and sculptured iconography present Marius with a dilemma and a challenge.

Marius emerges as a regional figure, a spokesman for the land and his people. Place names, always verbal signposts in

Fugard's landscape, pepper his conversation and root it in a certain area and time, Sneeuberg, Gamtoos Valley, Spitskop and Aasvoelkrans link Marius to a South African region. He is a man who knows his country with a certainty that permeates all aspects of his existence. Whereas Lena in Boesman and Lena confuses her place names and their order, Marius is lucid in his grasp of ideas. There is no room for doubt. He has his beliefs and responsibilities. Whereas Miss Helen creates her inner world, Marius rejoices in the external one: "The poplars with their autumn foliage standing around as yellow and still as that candle flame!" (Mecca, p. 53). The metaphor of light, the heart of Miss Helen's dark world, is translated into his biblical idiom, the light of faith suffusing and enhancing the natural world. His reassuring cadences establish a rapport between him and Miss Helen, excluding Elsa, the apex of the triangle. Tension mounts between Elsa and Marius, a confrontation that exemplifies the clash of conflicting worlds. Marius treads warily around the central issue, Helen's transferral to the home. He tells her there will be space in her little room there for "a few of your ... ornaments" (Mecca, p. 58). It is difficult for Helen, demoralized and vulnerable, to withstand his campaign.

Helen's pursuit of her vocation and her severing of social ties is viewed by Marius as a betrayal of the true faith. She has become an apostate, a rebel, abandoning the creed and principles of her people. Miss Helen, in her journey to Mecca has entered territory unfamiliar to Marius. An astute man, unlike the villagers, he knows she has not crossed the line from sanity to madness, but he mistrusts her work. The

complexity of his relationship with her is compounded by his love for her as a woman. Although unstated, this is nonetheless a potent factor in his concern for her, and is easily discerned by Elsa. In electing to follow the road to Mecca, Miss Helen has severed their relationship; her light is his darkness. His fundamentalist Calvinist faith can never accommodate her eastern philosophy. His attempts to claim her soul and heart have been unsuccessful. In defeat, he is honest, betraying his heartfelt admiration: "There is more light in you than in all your candles put together," he tells Helen before he leaves (Mecca, p. 74). Marius is the go-between, the diplomat/dominee who tries to negotiate a modus vivendi to satisfy all parties. In Marius, a composite character skillfully and sympathetically developed, Fugard strikes a balance between ideas and emotions. When Marius gives Miss Helen a basket of vegetables, we realize that they represent the fruits of the earth tilled by a clergyman rooted in the soil and filled with love for the Karoo's gentler moods and moments to which he does poetic justice. The charm and sincerity with which he puts forward his views are disarming, but his tactics are shrewd and subtle--he aligns himself with Helen against the outsider Elsa, which in many ways she undoubtedly is. The change in Miss Helen's perspective he attributes to Elsa's malevolent influence. It is not only chauvinistic suspicion of independent and liberated women seeking fulfilment, but profound jealousy of Elsa, "a stranger from a different world," with whom Miss Helen has formed a "misalliance" that excludes him (Mecca, p. 70). Elsa denies him not only his role as Miss Helen's spiritual guide and mentor,

but negates the bonds of affection that might otherwise have linked them "for what was left to us in the same world" (Mecca, p. 74).

Elsa's physical strength (Fugard characterizes her as "a strong young woman in her late twenties" [Mecca, p. 15]), corresponds with an innerly aggressive, tough-minded attitude to life. She has the outlook of a woman who hungers for a challenge and who testily scythes her way through arguments and opposition.

When Fugard met the young Englishwoman on whom he based Elsa, he was struck by her strength, her social conscience and her sense of outrage at what was wrong with South Africa. "I couldn't help thinking of the anomaly of this sort of stern decency encountering the almost feudal world of New Bethesda--a South Africa which disappeared from the rest of the country a hundred years ago," he said.[81] The issues to be resolved are not merely Miss Helen's future, leaving New Bethesda and entering an old age home. The conflict is triangular, widened by Elsa's presence that bolsters Miss Helen and simultaneously questions village paternalism towards the coloured people, bringing the play squarely into the political arena. Elsa's concern spills into a socio-political context, as evident in her condemnation of the dominee's paternalistic attitude to the coloured people, deciding what is right and wrong for them. Fugard himself was amazed at the extent of the play's political resonance after it had been tried out in the Yale Repertory Theatre. He was fearful that people would come to his play in expectation of Fugard the political writer and that as a consequence they would be disappointed and bewildered, "because

what the hell does this deal with but a little lady in the Karoo." He discovered that when people reviewed the play, they commented on political issues, "a different order and a different nature to the other plays, but it's there."[82] Fugard deemed Mecca a political play but was prepared for critics and audiences in South Africa not to see it as such and ask "What's happened to him?"[83]

The play dealt with the South African reality and in that sense was political. Fugard stated:

> Our situation in South Africa is so political. What story hasn't got political consequences? If you are going to try and tell a South African story honestly and truthfully you will end up saying something about the situation in the country. Politics get into every corner of our lives. Mecca is an example of this. An important element of the play is that Helen has to express herself in the face of active opposition from her little community. For them this is very strange behaviour. The word 'freedom' is used quite pointedly in the play and in South Africa freedom is a very political word.[84]

Elsa articulates Fugard's viewpoint when she asks "has anybody bothered to ask the Coloured people what they think about it all?" (Mecca, p. 25). She sees the situation in clearcut terms, much as Don observes the shenanigans in Milly's kitchen. Although there is a strong echo of Don in Elsa (she too serves as observer and catalyst) she is a person of action and an adult woman of her time, the 1980s. Significantly, she sees Bethesda caught in a nineteenth century time warp, with people debating peripheral issues and ignoring the centrality of current phenomena such as the political awareness of the coloured people. In her attempt to understand, she sees events with clarity and objectivity and attempts to confront others with her perceptions and judgements; e.g. she faces the

censure of a school board of enquiry into allegations that she asked students to write a letter to the State President on the subject of racial equality. Elsa believes in making people think for themselves and it is this outlook that informs her contact with Miss Helen: "Rebellion starts, Miss Helen, with just one man or woman standing up and saying, 'No. Enough!' Albert Camus. French writer" (Mecca, p. 28).

From the beginning we see that Elsa is not a conventional character. Despite her modernity, her contemporary stance, Elsa stands in line with Lena, Hester and Milly, eternal victims of their situations. The school bell that sounds at the close of her day has an elegiac sound akin to those that resonate through the poetry of Donne and Gray. Elsa's bell tolls for her: "And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; / It tolls for thee."[85] And like the curfew that tolls the knell of parting day in Thomas Gray's "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard," it "leaves the world to darkness and to me."[86]

The darkness that engulfs Fugard's women inexorably induces existential nausea and Elsa, whose literary and political consciousness has been shaped by among others Camus, is not exempt from this bedrock sickness: "I felt like vomiting," she cries (Mecca, p. 30). It is harder in many ways for Elsa, a blue stocking with a rational approach to life. Her knowledge derives from books and for all her vaunted cynicism, she has a romantic belief in words such as "love" and "trust." The betrayal of these ideals leads to painful growth for her, yet she can never be as street-wise as Hester. Her rejection by her lover emphasizes the male/female polarisation

in Fugard's world; his women suffer at the hands of menfolk.

Patience--Lena in a different guise--is a powerful figure embodying symbolically Elsa's resentment of racial inequality and her consciousness of the coloured people's raw deal in the land of apartheid. It is also revealed later that Elsa identifies with Patience as the mother who gives birth and endures the rigours of life while fulfilling the maternal role, a role Elsa had abdicated with her procured abortion. The audience does not see Patience and her baby, but she is referred to at great length throughout the play and her quiet unquestioning acceptance of life's injustice sounds an authentic note and provides a dramatic contrast to Elsa's rebellion against motherhood and the strictures of society. Elsa's identification with Patience is a powerful one, another example of her ability not only to empathize but also to sororize. Giving her a lift is a gesture of complicity with the African people and a personal commitment to another woman and mother. She talks of the African woman with apparent indifference but clearly there is a compulsion to dwell on her destiny, her expulsion from the farm, and her trek to the Cradock district where she hopes to find relatives and a place to live. It is significant that the woman is about Elsa's age and the baby probably the age her aborted child might have been. The identification is intellectual and emotional. Patience, like Lena, carries her possessions with her. Barefoot, with nothing interposing between their feet and the earth, she and Lena are human entities rooted in the desolate African landscape. But unlike Lena whose womb was blighted and babies stillborn, Patience is fruitful, the suffering earth

mother. Elsa's emotional alliance with Patience is echoed in her concern for Katrina, Miss Helen's maid, battered by a bullying husband. Katrina is the focus for Elsa's sense of outrage at woman's meek acceptance of painful situations. Elsa's creed, forged through the sorrow of rejection and abortion, repudiates the traditional formula adhered to by women such as Lena, Katrina and, on a higher plane, even Miss Helen. She seeks equality of commitment, somebody for Katrina and herself "who will value her as a human being and take care of her and the child" (Mecca, p. 23).

From a feminist viewpoint, Elsa stands in the forefront of a long line of Fugardian women who debate the female condition. Lena, Hester and Milly all agonize over constraints, limitations, social and political checks, that keep them within restricted boundaries, but it is Elsa who practises what she preaches. In her, Lena, Hester and Milly come of age. Elsa hectors, badgers and prods her sisters to stand up and be counted.

Elsa's friendship with Miss Helen offers a new perspective, hope and redemption. Through mutual reinforcement, they can confront painful issues and overcome them. It is only Elsa with whom Helen's "little girl can come out and play. All the doors are wide open!" (Mecca, p. 32). Elsa reinforces Helen's belief in herself and her work. It is not the slavish devotion and admiration of a disciple for a master but interaction on a basis of equality. Although Elsa is often detached and sits back in judgement on Helen's attitudes and behavioural patterns, she nonetheless is seen as an emotional entity, a character in search of herself through

action, confrontation and relentless self-examination. Whereas Don in People is an astute sounding-board, giving definitions and mouthing textbook jargon, Elsa's thoughts and feelings are coloured to a large extent by her suffering and pain. She arrives at Helen's home only with an overnight bag but with an enormous amount of emotional baggage. This contributes to her dramatic stature as a character in her own right. She is not just a foil, or catalyst, for Miss Helen's evolution. Both women have evaded societal pressures and bonds in their different ways. Elsa through her love affair with a married man flouted convention, even more so with her abortion. She alienates the school and parent body with radical politics. Her revolt is an intellectual one that takes its toll of her emotional resources.

In her contest with life, Elsa gains a sense of self and it is this inner strength, stemming as it does from integrity, that she directs to Miss Helen, a woman she admires for her refusal to be beaten by the mediocrity of provincial life. In the interaction of characters, a comprehensive picture of both women is created. Miss Helen, a product of Afrikaner Calvinism, is a rebel, a "renegade," rejecting the religious faith of her people. She has deserted not only her people's principles but her people, from whom she withdrew after the death of her husband. Sadly, the villagers find her way of life and her sculptural "monstrosities" reprehensible.

Miss Helen's rebellion and the acrimony her work provokes is the story of a sensitive soul misunderstood by society. In another age she might have been burned at the stake as a witch and there is this element of superstition in the manner the

villagers equate her with a bogey-man who harms naughty children. The reality is different but difficult for them to comprehend.

Her intelligence crosses cultural boundaries and her sculptures are eastern in inspiration and concept. She thinks creatively and relates to the world in a way that diverges radically from the conventions of those among whom she lives. Her art is an esoteric and eclectic realm to them and consequently she is viewed as a foreigner and treated with suspicion, someone whom they term "mad as a hatter," "a genuine Karoo nutcase" (Mecca, p. 33). Even Elsa testifies to the hallucinatory quality of the sculptures seen in the context of the dusty and deserted Karoo village. Fugard stated that an important element of the play was Helen asserting herself in the face of active opposition from her little community. "For them this is very strange behaviour," he said.[87] Miss Helen has retreated into a world of her own making, represented by the set, an extraordinary room of light and extravagant fantasy, with mirrored walls and solid, multi-coloured geometric patterns on floor and ceiling. The large window at the back looks onto the backyard, crowded with her collection of strange statues. The room suggests and conveys her visionary, or poetic, perspective.

Whereas Elsa flounders spiritually, Miss Helen has devised an answer, withdrawal into a world filled with a magical light that literally and metaphorically dispels the darkness. The mirrors that glitter and candles that glow banish the fears of the child/woman, and at the same time illuminate an otherwise dreary existence. "Never light a candle carelessly, and be

sure you know what you're doing when you blow one out!" she tells Elsa (Mecca, p. 32), who, filled with admiration, calls her "a little wizard." There is an indomitable power in Miss Helen that enables her to turn the dross of existence into creative light and life. The little girl desperately reciting prayers to delay the moment when her mother blew out the candle discovered the miracle of light and it suffused her otherwise bleak world. In her way Miss Helen is playing at being God. Just as her sculptures are the artist's act of creation, so her passion for light suggests the divine element in her artistic ability; for surely artists are this world's minor divinities. There is nothing smug or arrogant in Miss Helen's assertion that "Light is a miracle, Miss Barlow, which even the most ordinary human being can make happen" (Mecca, p. 32). There is a strong Genesis sub-text here, for Helen's "miracle of light and colour" in a dusty and deserted Karoo village is akin to God's creation of light:

> And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years:
> And let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth: and it was so.[88]

In her acts of creation, Miss Helen separates herself from the night of the spirit and from the unenlightened villagers. They are at the same time acts of creation and acts of alienation. In moving towards Mecca she inevitably leaves the villagers behind. Even Marius, eager to travel life's road with her, cannot undertake a journey incompatible with his Christian conscience. Elsa, however, is equal to the challenge. Their meeting vindicates Helen's belief in herself and her art.

Their friendship is a union of kindred spirits, a marriage of true minds:

> Let me not to the marriage of true minds
> Admit impediments. Love is not love
> Which alters when it alteration finds
> Or bends with the remover to remove:
> ....
> Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
> But bears it out even to the edge of doom.[89]

Elsa's first entry into Helen's home is not unlike the consummation of groom and bride: "I was beginning to feel shy, more shy than I had ever been with Stefanus on my wedding night," says Helen (Mecca, p. 34). For the room they entered is a summary of the person, the essence of Helen, filled with signals that Elsa can decode. Entry to Helen's house means entry to her private world, and Elsa's delighted acceptance of all she stands for seals their friendship. At last Helen can trust someone, a friend in a supportive role, able to bolster her belief in her work, endorsing her journey towards Mecca. Miss Helen tells Elsa:

> The only reason I've got for being alive is my Mecca. Without that I'm ... nothing ... a useless old woman getting on everybody's nerves ... and that is exactly what I had started to feel like. You revived my life (Mecca, p. 35).

Her contact and friendship with Elsa leads to renewed creativity, negating the powers of darkness.

There is a universality in her vision. It incorporates religions, ritualistic artefacts and mythologies of the world. It ranges from owls and mermaids to a stern Buddha and an Easter Island head. It is the Mecca of Miss Helen's sub-conscious, with a logic of its own that even she fails to understand. The incorporation of a Buddha is a landmark in Fugard's spiritual geography, for his absorption in Zen

Buddhism is a still and tranquil point in his life. His wife, Sheila, made Buddhism a real presence in their lives and Fugard uses a particular mantra to protect himself from disasters.[90] There is something of the Buddhistic priest about Miss Helen, alone and isolated, withdrawn from society, with her unique ability to perceive things as they really are. According to N. W. Ross, Zen expresses a centuries-old understanding that the mind can be taught to still itself, thereby making possible self-discovery, uncovering what is already present through the unrecognized.[91] Early Chinese Zen was characterized by an exuberant spirit of enlightenment, a dynamic bursting of restrictive bonds, part of a spontaneous desire to be rid of lifeless religious dogma, to discard empty ritualized formulas and, instead, to be carried by the storm of the spirit. The eye of truth opens and the mind is relieved of ignorance. The aim in Zen is to get in touch with the centre of one's physical and mental being. Ross points out that a change, often perplexing to friends and family, occurs in the practitioner.[92] The surrender by the tenacious ego is considered in Zen the only possible way to reach one's true being and become rooted in the very ground of life itself.

Any assumption that Zen implies passivity, inaction or withdrawal is wide of the mark. Meditative practice brings personal discovery of interior space and stillness, the connection between outer and inner. Miss Helen's Mecca is a statement of religious and psychological truth. All her sculptures face east, all testify to the east as a source of potential harmony, love and redemption. No wonder her conformist neighbours could not understand ideas that

represented the conscience and imagination of the artist. We suspect that lines given to Miss Helen reflecting the anguish of the artist, the uncertainty of the artistic process, the debilitating wait for inspiration, mirror the experience of the playwright himself. It is in passages spoken with inner agitation by Miss Helen that we perhaps hear Fugard's authentic and personal voice.

In some of Miss Helen's halting cadences, too, we detect an autobiographical element:

> I have to see them very clearly first. They've got to come to me inside like pictures. And if they don't, well, all I can do is wait ... and hope that they will. I wish I knew how to make it happen, but I don't. I don't know where the pictures come from. I can't force myself to see something that isn't there (Mecca, p. 36).

This is a picture not only of Miss Helen but also of Fugard and every artist waiting and hoping for moments of artistic truth, caught in the limbo of sterility. "Please no. Anything but that," an anguished Helen exlaims (Mecca, p. 37). In torment and deeply depressed, Miss Helen writes to Elsa. The letter, reminiscent in dramatic terms of that written by Zachariah to Miss Ethel in Blood Knot, is Helen's cri de coeur, a statement of physical, psychological and spiritual suffering, revealing her position as outcast and alien and her phobic confrontation with forces of darkness that threaten to overwhelm her and nullify her life's work. With economy of brushwork, Fugard paints a desperate picture of physical deterioration and isolation: "I am alone in the dark. There is no light left" (Mecca, p. 39). In a crisis situation, she craves communication with Elsa.

Yvonne Bryceland, who played Miss Helen in the Johannes-

burg Market Theatre production in 1984, said:

> I am moved by her as a woman, saddened by the fact that so few people bothered to understand her talent and her pain. How awful to live one's whole life and get so little in terms of other people's response.[93]

Bryceland commented that although the real Miss Helen's suicide does not come into the play, "the knowledge is painful to live with."

Regrettably, Miss Helen closed the channels of communication in her village and her withdrawal inevitably precluded any potential recognition of her worth as an individual or artist, the validation of self she craves much as Lena yearns to hear her name spoken by another human being. Her friendship with Elsa is vital in this way, giving her confidence as a personality and reassurance as an artist. "I can't fight them alone, little Elsie" (Mecca, p. 39), she writes in a last-ditch attempt to reach out and talk to another person. Miss Helen's control of herself and her world is threatened and she despairs. It is the shadow of hinted suicide that prompts Elsa to come to her aid. She is disturbed by a threat so uncharacteristic of Fugard's women, who resolutely hang on and never give up hope of redemption. They put on a brave front no matter how pointless life seems. Painfully, they assert themselves in a bid to control their lives despite emotional confusion and uncertainty. Helen's crisis compels an immediate response from Elsa, who can sustain and strengthen her so that she emerges ultimately as a Fugardian woman of courage. Suicide would be a betrayal of what Miss Helen's Mecca represents, an ideal world brought into being by the creative imagination of a visionary artist. Elsa is deeply concerned

about Helen's dilemma and her life generally, by the insidious growth of depression, the suspension of creative drives and the consequent pain experienced by a sensitive soul floundering in the dark. In the opening sequence of the play there are disturbing hints, both overt and covert, that point to Miss Helen's disregard of her own welfare, a suggestion of personal neglect in her shabby clothes, not enough in the kitchen for a decent supper, and her inability to recall when last she bathed.

Elsa represents a crucial human bond, almost that of a headstrong daughter. Helen's other social relationships, besides Katrina the maid and the dominee, have broken down. Her need for love and support is acute. She has no identity in terms of anyone other than Elsa, whose recognition of her worth re-affirms her self-image. Elsa dismisses Marius' allegations, believing his social concern for Miss Helen veils a bullying attempt to rid the town of an embarrassing element, a view Miss Helen shares: "All they want is to get rid of me" (Mecca, p. 60). As her emotional state deteriorates, she appears to succumb to Marius' foreceful arguments. Although she holds out valiantly, her resistance is erratic; she wavers and becomes increasingly distressed. Her sense of isolation is exacerbated by the news that Katrina may leave the village. Katrina is her link with the outside world, her shield of sociability warding off suspicious gossip. Her estrangement from the community, her withdrawal into her self-created cocoon and the failure of society to understand her artistic mission appear irrevocable and final. The village, ignorant in its condemnation of her life and work, could never accommodate her intellectually and

now there is reluctance to accommodate her physically. It is her moment of choice and she wavers. That there is a choice at all, that she can consciously make a decision to stay or go, to create or conform, to triumph or succumb, is a privilege in Fugard's world, a right never vouchsafed to Lena on the Swartkops mudflats or to Patience, who must trudge with her baby to relatives elsewhere. Patience's situation counterpoints Miss Helen's: she, too, is faced with a move from her home, but she has no choice. Regrettably, she is at the mercy of a callous society, indifferent to her as a human being. Condemned to leave, her only course is resignation and adaptation. But Miss Helen can still assert herself and direct her destiny. Her incapacity to react positively is a betrayal of the feminist partnership that exists between her and Elsa and of their mutual thrust towards future goals and fulfilment. A disillusioned Elsa cries:

> Why were you 'crying out to me in the dark'? To be an audience when you signed away your life? Is that why I'm here? Twelve hours of driving like a lunatic for that? God. What a farce! I might just as well have stayed in Cape Town (Mecca, pp. 61-62).

Elsa respects Miss Helen for her individuality expressed and maintained despite fierce and denigrating criticism and pressure. To falter after going so far together would be a breach of faith, retrogression and confused submission to paternalistic forces rather than adopting a stance of independence and fortitude. It is Fugard's strength as a dramatist that these issues are not presented in contrasting black/white terms. Mecca is not a medieval morality play with easily identifiable good and bad, right and wrong. It is a complex mosaic, an overall design embodying the components of

human vice and virtue, environmental pressures and social expectations. There are laudable aspects to Marius' concern for Miss Helen, who stands mesmerised by the flames that threaten her life. There are cruel traits in Elsa's character, evident in her cutting and harsh condemnation of Miss Helen. Disappointment makes her pitiless. The focus of conflict shifts from the central issue of Miss Helen's projected exile, to the shortcomings and inconsistencies in the relationship between Elsa and Miss Helen. "Who are you?" Helen asks Elsa (Mecca, p. 65), a devastating question that undermines their carefully constructed friendship, revealing in that brief phrase Helen's failure to find support, and her estrangement. She looks at Elsa but no longer sees a friend. Elsa's impassivity, however, is not a dereliction of duty. She views Helen's weakness as a betrayal of freedom, a betrayal of all she stood for, a reversal of what she achieved over 15 years.

Fugard has commented that in the real Miss Helen's life there was a period during which she made nothing, did nothing and became depressed and paranoid.[94] Fugard's Miss Helen exhibits no mental instability yet she is regarded by the village community as an eccentric. They are incapable of sharing her personal vision. "In another age and time it might have been called idolatry," Marius remarks disparagingly of her art work (Mecca, p. 67). Marius, who represents Calvinist theology and doctrine, reacts negatively to Helen's sculptures. To him they are not the "expression of freedom" nor the idle whim of a lonely woman but a relapse into heathen ways and the worship of pagan gods, excluding devotion to the Christian God of her people. Her work is neither the delusion of a dangerous

woman, nor the hallucinations of a paranoid recluse. The death of her husband freed her from the commitment and constraints of marriage and society. His death was a turning point in her life. At last she was able to cast off the pretence and deception of middle-class propriety, shedding the role of dutiful wife and refusing to assume that of the stereotypical widow.

In a lengthy, eloquent and poetic soliloquy, she confronts Marius gently but firmly with her loss of faith, the meaninglessness of sermons, prayers and hymns. Her husband's death brought her face to face with her own lonely life: "My black widowhood was really for my own life," she states simply (Mecca, p. 71). She mourns the death of her youth, the demise of hope and light, the threat of enveloping darkness symbolically suggested by the closing of curtains and shutters. Oppressed by claustrophobic darkness, the night of an anguished soul desperately seeking solace to offset a threatening fate, she recalls the genesis of her work, the first steps along her artistic road to Mecca. In language steeped in Jungian associations, she recalls: "I didn't know whether I was awake any longer or dreaming because a strange feeling came over me .... that it was leading me ... leading me far away to a place I had never been to before" (Mecca, p. 72). C. G. Jung observed that the dream is a hidden door in the psyche opening into the "cosmic night."[95] Ironically Marius points the way, not with the light of his Calvinist doctrines, but with the small candle of compassion he leaves with her to ward off the dark. That small flame is evocative, generating a complicated phenomenon of its own. The visual stimulus of light is a

pointer to the city of celestial light, Miss Helen's Mecca. In that small flame she discerns the challenging light of oriental revelations not unlike the opening quattrain of Omar Khayyam's Rubaiyat:

> Awake! for Morning in the Bowl of Night
> Has flung the Stone that puts
> the Stars to Flight:
> And lo! the Hunter of
> the East has caught
> The Sultan's Turret in a
> Noose of Light.[96]

In words that reinforce the visual magic created on stage when Elsa lights the candles reflected in mirrors and crushed glass surfaces, Fugard sweeps his characters towards a dramatic apotheosis. Miss Helen, radiantly alive, is a high priestess, exalted by her release from darkness and her ascension to Mecca. She is transfigured into a joyous and ecstatic celebrant of her divine truth. She exclaims: "Light just one little candle in here, let in the light from just one little star, and the dancing starts" (Mecca, pp. 72-73). It is her prescription for happiness and in giving form to her vision she leaves the spheres of philosophy and theology to become an artist, an apprentice studying "the celestial geometry of light and colour" (Mecca, p. 72), attempting to convey the beauty and power of her vision in works made of cement and wire, the artist wrestling with material to give shape to imaginative concepts. Fugard's central theme of creativity is expressed by Miss Helen, who acknowledges that ideas do not translate easily into forms. Her statement: "My hands will never let me forget. They'll keep me sane" (Mecca, p. 73), echoes the painful concensus arrived at by artists and writers with whom Fugard arguably would identify, such as Joseph Conrad, who

wrote of "a lonely struggle and a great isolation from the world;" and Emily Bronte, who wrote:

> O! dreadful is the check--intense the agony
> When the ear begins to hear, and the eye begins to see;
> When the pulse begins to throb, the brain to think again;
> The soul to feel the flesh, and the flesh to feel the chain.[97]

Yet the creative impulse cannot be denied. It is vouchsafed to a few upon whom the responsibility rests to record their visions. Emily Dickinson, with whom Fugard links his Miss Helen, wrote:

> Had I not seen the Sun
> I could have borne the shade
> But Light a newer Wilderness
> My Wilderness has made--[98]

Miss Helen pushes forward the frontiers of artistic expression, incorporating non-western cultural ideas and translating them into her own symbolism, aware all the time of her withdrawal from her people, who dismissed her work with derision. Her vision can never be contained in an old-age home to which the villagers hope to consign her, burying there her embarrassing idiosyncracies. In heeding the creative call, a highly individualistic one, Miss Helen becomes a deviant, rejecting her conservative community and following a course incomprehensible to them. It is not something she consciously elects to do. It is an irrestible compulsion, her destiny and necessary fate. For Fugard, whose familiarity with Buddhism would predispose him to take this view of artistic creation, this is Karma, the sum of a person's actions in one of the successive states of existence determining fate in the next. Miss Helen tells Marius: "I had as little choice over all that

has happened as I did over the day I was born" (Meccca, p. 73).

What remains of the play is commentary and Fugard ties the loose ends with dramatic dexterity. Elsa applauds Helen's "performance," affirming their feminist stance in a male-dominated world. After all, it is Helen's world view that has prevailed. There is, too, the assumption that Miss Helen's sacerdotal power elevates her above concerns that plague lesser beings, such as Elsa and Patience. "There's no Mecca waiting for her at the end of that road, Helen," Elsa states with bitter conviction (Mecca, p. 76). The two women stand united on a power base apart from the men who have failed them either spiritually (Marius) or emotionally (David). Despite the universality of birth, maternity and nurturing that gives women everywhere a common identity, Elsa is still overwhelmed by existential isolation: "Patience is my sister, you are our mother ... and I still feel fucking lonely," she tells Helen (Mecca, p. 77). It is the dilemma of Lena, Milly and Hester, associating with people yet cut-off and attempting to redress their inequitable situations, to achieve recognition of their humanity and existence. Elsa represents progression in Fugard's evolution of the female. Firstly, she recognises the helplessness of women, the threat age represents (Milly); the inferiority of being a black woman (Patience); the rootlessness of those cut off from their background (Hester); and the vulnerability of those who trust (Elsa). She surveys the human spectrum and perceives the dilemma of women, their helplessness and stupidity. In the tradition of Fugard's women, however, she never submits to fate but protests articulately. Elsa and

Helen move further along the road of emancipation than any other Fugardian woman. They not only recognise the death of love and hope within their lives but through acceptance, grieving and mourning they achieve a new emotional balance and peace. The tears Elsa finally sheds are not those of a self-pitying woman but means to emotional release. Helen, Elsa and Patience have travelled different roads to different goals, literally and metaphorically. Patience walks painfully towards a mirage of shelter and comfort; Elsa travels to New Bethesda ostensibly to fortify Miss Helen yet subconsciously in need of consolation herself; Miss Helen travels alone along her road to Mecca and comes to terms with the completion of her work and the consequent loss of sustaining purpose in what remains of her life.

All endure suffering and darkness. Miss Helen, the visionary and mystic, evolves a philosophical attitude, a stoical acquiescence:

> I was wrong to think I could banish darkness, Elsa. Just as I taught myself how to light candles, and what that means, I must teach myself now how to blow them out ... and what that means (Mecca, p. 78).

Grateful for the light of artistic revelation when it shines, she must accept the sterility of non-creative periods; just as abortion extinguishes the light of life in Elsa, she, too, must get through the darkness of sorrow and regret; and Patience has to combat the darkness of a draconian and hostile environment. All Fugard's women in this play come to an enlightened acceptance of the human condition, light and darkness, yin and yan, the Heraclitean concept of opposites constituting a whole. There is also the ability to laugh, the

safety valve of humour. Elsa chuckles at Miss Helen's naïve description of valium as artificial sweeteners, just as Milly laughs at the thought of monkeys with blue bums. It is an affirmative sound, almost a triumphant note of normality after intensive introspection, interrogation, crises and traumas. Helen's tongue-in-cheek humour, "I'd misdirect all the good Christian souls around here and put them on the road to Mecca" (Mecca, p. 79), and their laughter, Helen's and Elsa's, stem from an inner equilibrium. It is laughter that unites them in their joint perception of the gulf separating them from others.

The play ultimately endorses love and trust, two words crucial to Elsa's emotional security. Those two words coalesce in her relationship with Helen, whereas David, the male principle, won her love but lost her trust. The tryst between the two women validates Fugard's use of the words love and trust, words that illuminate the text with neon intensity, as Elsa tells Helen: "Do you know what the really big word is, Helen? .... I used to think it was 'love' .... But there's an even bigger one. Trust" (Mecca, p. 31). There is no mistaking the centrality of these emotional concepts. Fugard highlights them, his characters savouring their sound with the appreciation of literary and linguistic connoisseurs. It is what the writer of this thesis terms Fugard's "neon light syndrome," the text is momentarily ablaze with meaning: "I knew I could trust them (Elsa's eyes). There's our big word again, Elsie!" (Mecca, p. 34).

The neon light syndrome occurs whenever Fugard's characters confront consciously emotional and intellectual

issues of great moment in their development and lives. Elsa and Helen's big word is "trust," just as Boesman's big word is "freedom" and Zachariah's big words are "prejudice and inhumanity." The use of "big words" is a Fugardian signpost en route to understanding his characters. He focuses on an issue crucial in terms of the character's background, aspirations and prospects. The theme of freedom is given the same treatment. Marius tells Elsa and Helen: "freedom? .... I do hate that word" (Mecca, p. 69). Elsa uses the same incendiary word: "Those statues out there are monsters. And they are that for the simple reason that they express Helen's freedom. Yes, I never thought it was a word you would like" (Mecca, p. 66). It is the preoccupation of the master craftsman, the dramatist, with the tools of his trade. It is a device Fugard employs to magnify an issue, to place it under the microscope for meticulous dissection. It is his method of signalling the onset of crisis. Finally, in wresting every nuance and meaning from his big words, he offers insight into the manipulative power of the writer to propagandize and evangelize: "I tried hard, Marius," Miss Helen confesses, "but your sermons, the prayers, the hymns, they had all become just words. And there came a time when even they lost their meaning" (Mecca, p. 70). When words finally fail, when they are stripped of all meaning, when "trust" has been abused, "love" negated and "freedom" denied, then Fugard turns to the visual medium:

> Do you know what the word 'God' looks like when you've lost your faith? It looks like a little stone, a cold, round, little stone. 'Heaven' is another one, but its got an awkward, useless shape, while 'Hell' is flat and smooth. All of them--damnation, grace, salvation--a handful of stones (Mecca, p. 70).

Love, trust, challenge, freedom, Fugard's big words are woven tightly into the texture of the play. They echo thematic material presented in other plays; single words that integrated into the text acquire special validity. Mecca is primarily about Fugard's word "freedom."

The human condition threatens Miss Helen, Elsa, Marius and Patience in different ways and on many levels. Elsa attempts to be free by defining life in her own terms. Marius chooses a collective identity with his flock, while Miss Helen, in voluntary exile from her fellow human-beings, experiences existential aloneness that renders her free spiritually. The sculptural expression of her freedom is mistrusted by those around her.

Fugard's prose is graceful and he gives his characters time in eloquent, lengthy speeches to develop their standpoints. This lengthiness has evoked adverse comment. Martin Cropper of The Times, London, has criticised Fugard's tendency to allow his characters to lapse into portentous speeches about their situations, and Eric Shorter in the Daily Telegraph has called the play overlong and overwritten.[99] The lengthy soliloquies however, are dramatic focal points. They may be long but they have validity in terms of the construction of the play and the development of characters. Marius, after all, is a dominee, accustomed to speaking from a pulpit. Elsa as a teacher, used to communicating and lecturing to a class, is an articulate young woman, well able to verbalise her thoughts and feelings. Helen's lengthy outpouring at a later stage in Act II can be justified in different terms. It is as if the assault of the village breaches the dam walls, releasing a

verbal deluge. Words flood the theatre, the pent-up emotions of a reclusive yet sensitive and suffering artist. It is also speech appropriate to a village where life is unhurried, vastly different from city pressures and time limits that condense conversation and contacts. The only deadline is that imposed by Elsa, who must return to Cape Town the following morning. Given this leisurely milieu, the relatively slow-moving soliloquies are psychologically and dramatically acceptable. The lengthy passages serve to round out the characters whose thoughts flow in an eloquent stream of consciousness.

The writing has flaws, but it is overall a play entirely worthy of Fugard in his later creative years, revealing a sure grasp of character, dialogue, dramatic structure and interaction. The play literally dazzles the viewer, and the big moments and the big words all work. Dramatically it is worlds away from an earlier work such as People Are Living There. It is the work of a mature playwright, bearing his technical trademarks, his obsessive preoccupation with certain themes and his visionary optimism. It is arguably a major work in the repertoire of contemporary theatre.

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[17] Anna Rutherford, "Time, Space and Identity in The Blood Knot," in Athol Fugard, ed., Stephen Gray, p. 157.

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[19] Russell Vandenbroucke, Truths the Hand Can Touch (Craighall: A D. Donker, 1986), p. 113.

[20] Fugard, Notebooks, p. 198.

[21] In Don there is also an element of Perseus Adams, the poet with whom Fugard hitch-hiked through Africa.

[22] Don Maclennan, "The Palimpsest," p. 219.

[23] David Harrison, The White Tribe of Africa (Johannesburg: Macmillan, 1985), p. 76.

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8. Dimetos

In September 1963 in his Notebooks Fugard recalled his excitement at first reading the myth of Dimetos in Camus's Carnets.[1] The story of a man in love with a beautiful but dead young woman washed up by the sea, then watching the decay and corruption of what he loves until he goes mad, struck Fugard as "the germinal idea of a play." Two years later he saw a struggling seal amid the chaos of waves and rocks and wrote: "A magnificent animal. Primordial beauty of this strangely-fashioned, ungainly creature when seen against the background of the violent open sea."[2]

A decade later, in February 1975, Fugard accepted a commission from the Edinburgh Festival to present a new work there and he decided to take up the idea of Dimetos and, as with most generic images that lay buried in his subconscious mind, to keep his appointment with this personal myth. The work proceeded fluently, with images rapidly defined. After preliminary performances in Cape Town at The Space and also in Johannesburg, the production, directed by Fugard, travelled to the Edinburgh Festival where it was premièred on 27 August 1975. Possibly as a result of the adverse critical response to the play, Fugard reshaped his play prior to the London season, giving it two specific settings in his imagination: Act I New Bethesda, a remote village in the Karoo where the Fugards have a small house; and Act II Gaukamma Beach, a desolate stretch

of beach near Mossel Bay.[3] It is this modified version seen in Nottingham and London in 1976 and published by Oxford University Press in 1977 that the writer of this thesis has studied and evaluated.

What puzzled critics and audiences alike were the non-specifics of the play, its obscurity and inaccessibility, meanings locked within metaphors that eluded the average theatregoer. As a play it merits the description "unique" in relation to Fugard's entire canon of works. If not in performance, in text it is a powerful play encompassing philosophical systems debated by men of antiquity, and psychological truths with which modern man is no less preoccupied. Taken in toto, the range of insights, the grasp of character, the comprehensive nature of the themes combine to make this a work reflecting as much if not more of Fugard the man, artist and thinker than any of his preceding or subsequent work.

In the play, Dimetos, a renowned engineer, his housekeeper, Sophia, and niece, Lydia, leave the city and retire to an isolated village on the coast. Their relative tranquillity is interrupted by the arrival of a former colleague, Danilo, who begs Dimetos to return to the city environment where he is needed and appreciated. His proposal provokes discussion and dissension, and his presence, directly and indirectly, unleashes a range of responses leading to the play's central tragedy. A little drunk, Danilo assaults Lydia, an event witnessed by Dimetos. Distressed by Danilo's violence and disturbed by the voyeurism and non-intervention of Dimetos, Lydia hangs herself. The consequences of her suicide

in Dimetos' guilt, increased alienation and madness are fully explored in Act II, as are Sophia's shame at her own passive role and her growing cynicism and disillusionment resulting from her relationship with Dimetos. Danilo returns briefly and vengefully. He coerces Dimetos to acknowledge his guilty love for his niece, a perversion of nature symbolised by a rotting whale carcass washed up on the shore. Alone at last, Dimetos communes with Lydia in the play's final scene in which she seems to assert the supremacy and superiority of the artist in a technological world. The play ends with Dimetos' ready apprenticeship to this new discipline.

Fugard prefaced Dimetos with William Blake's apparent denunciation of science: ".... May God us keep / From Single vision & Newton's sleep!"[4]

A year later when reworking the play, he acknowledged his debt to Theodore Roszak's book Where the Wasteland Ends,[5] noting the strange coincidence of Roszak's Blake/Newton juxtaposition. "That book helped me understand what I was trying to say," he wrote.[6] Roszak's study of Politics and Transcendence in Postindustrial Society, the book's sub-title, probes the psychology of single vision and how the scientific revolution betrayed its brightest ideals. Of particular significance to Fugard and Dimetos is Roszak's exegesis of Blake's philosophy. He points out that Blake does not reject single vision but embraces it within the fourfold whole, the naturalistic within the sacred, Newton's science within Blake's imagination: the atoms of analytical science are grains in the visionary landscape. "Single vision dis-integrates the landscape, reduces it to bits and pieces, discovers how it

works, but not what it means," writes Roszak.[7]

His observations are relevant to Dimetos, which registers Fugard's own plea for the recognition of artistry within a primarily scientific age. Just as Blake embodied his full horror of the scientific cosmos in his creation of Urizen, "Your Reason," functional logicality and scientized culture ruling modern society and measuring space with giant calipers, so does Fugard's Dimetos symbolize a rational power absorbed in definitions and applications of scientific principles such as gravity and the lever. There is a marked correspondence between Blake's Urizen and Dimetos. Both architects of geometric structures, Urizen builds dark, Satanic mills, while Dimetos masterminds engineering projects. Blake associates Urizen with despair, the despair of single vision alienated from the free emotive power of the soul; just as Fugard's Dimetos, too, uses rationality to dominate his world.

Roszak argues that single vision, the dominant mode of the scientific worldview, becomes the limiting condition of human consciousness within urban-industrial culture, indeed its whole raison d'etre. It is against this technocracy that Blake, Roszak, as his interpreter and commentator, and Fugard revolt, believing that scientific possibilities, skills and resources should be subordinated to the general pattern of life. They should be options and possibilities but not the overall system. Roszak and Fugard, through Dimetos, discourse at length on gravity, perceived by both as the loss of spiritual buoyancy; "Newton's sleep," a notion which by implication contradicts the rise and flight of the soul. Blake perceived the discussion of gravity--realistic, objective and secular--as being devoid of

spiritual meaning, a topic alienating man from mythic and religious perspectives.

Roszak writes:

> With Newton's speculations on gravity, we are at the beginning of a natural philosophy grounded in alienation, the measure of alienation being the degree to which the symbols used by a culture to achieve understanding have been emptied of their transcendent energy.[8]

For Newton and Dimetos, gravity is the measurable behaviour of things, an abstraction, an algebraic equation, at the same time mechanistic and empirical. Roszak highlights Blake's indebtedness to Gnostic and Hermetic philosophers, from whom he derived his transcendent symbolism and there are elements of Fugard's vocabulary, which are derived consciously or not, from this esoteric tradition.

As Roszak points out, no Sartre or Beckett has ever drawn a bleaker picture of the human condition than that of the Gnostic cosmology. "We are not the first people in history to suffer the psychic corrosion of alienation,"[9] he writes. This concept was so meaningful to Fugard that he incorporated the sentence into his Notebooks in February 1976, the month he completed the reworked draft of Dimetos. Hans Jonas, in his study of Gnostic religion, stresses the Gnostic concept of alienation, the anguish of the stranger.[10] In his remote, inaccessible locality, Dimetos represents life exiled from life, estranged from its background. He suffers in self-imposed exile from the city. Steeped not only in Blake's poetry but also in Roszak's dialectic, and influenced by his premise that man in the urban-industrial world of the west is alienated by technology and science from a sacramental

relationship to the world around and within him, Fugard condensed his response in a cryptic equation easily decoded in Gnostic terms: "Dimetos--alienation. Loss of Transcendence."[11] Gnostics believed that the transcendent self was the true subject of salvation,[12] the transcendent principle in the human soul referred to by St. Paul in the New Testament as the "spirit" (pneuma), "the inner man."[13]

It was between this principle hidden within the terrestrial person and its heavenly original that recognition and the ultimate reunion took place. Fugard is clearly concerned with the loss of this transcendent inner principle in Dimetos, and this is akin to a concern about destiny that is at the centre of Gnostic religion.

Although the Gnostic vision anticipates existential angst, Gnostic myth also speaks of salvation and redemption, the illumination in the abyss. This awakening from "Single vision & Newton's sleep" is exemplified in Dimetos by a revelation of creative purpose and of a non-technological realm. A fundamental element in the Gnostic view of the world is the concept of the redeemer.[14] Man can only become aware of his calamitous situation because it is made known to him by revelation from outside the cosmos, displaying the possibility of deliverance. A call from outside awakens him from ignorance, just as Lydia's voice instructs Dimetos, securing his conversion to the values of a different order. The Gnostic myth of the lost soul and its salvation is interpreted by Roszak as a drama of everyman's spiritual travail and, collectively, the tragedy of an urban-industrial epoch. "Determined to build the New Jerusalem with dynamoes and

computers, we have finished as prisoners of the artificial environment," he writes.[15] The Dimetos story may be viewed as a return of a madman from self-annihilation in the depths to enlightenment; the Gnostic apocatastasis, the great restoration. "A new reality embraces the old and draws the fallen spirit up, wiser than if it had never fallen," writes Roszak.[16] It is the awakening of Dimetos from single vision, his spiritual regeneration; the triumph of creativity over technocratic imperatives of an urban-industrial society.

Aside from Blake's influence on Fugard evident in the central themes of Dimetos, the play incorporates Gnostic symbolism in its language, e.g. Fugard's choice of the name Sophia for Dimetos' housekeeper, a name reserved in Gnostic tradition for the female aspect of God and generally denoting wisdom. In any evaluation of the meaning of the rotting whale beached on a rock in Dimetos, one cannot exclude reference to the Gnostic myth in which Sophia on beholding boundless darkness and waters gives birth to a frightful apparition. Viewed from this perspective, the putrefaction of the sea monster in Dimetos is as much an emanation of Sophia's shame as a product of Dimetos' guilt. The rotting carcass is not unlike the beast described in Revelation 13: "And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea ... and upon his heads the name of blasphemy."

A dominant motif in Dimetos is that of falling. In the opening scene Dimetos and Lydia rescue a horse that falls down a well and in the final scene Dimetos recounts his dream of a man/horse falling "out of the world into a place where it was cold and dark" (Dimetos, p. 51), one of the fundamental symbols

of Gnosticism. As Jonas points out, the downward movement is a guilty inclination of the soul toward the lower realms. Various motivations such as curiosity, vanity and sensual desire are the Gnostic equivalent of original sin.[17] It is a reading that elucidates otherwise puzzling aspects of Dimetos, who recounts his dream in terms of the alienated soul trapped in captivity and awaiting redemption, a symbolic/mythological being locked in the role of victim:

> There was no hoping or waiting for help, just successive eternities of cold mud, the darkness in his very open eyes, and nowhere to go. He tried, but there was nowhere else to go.
>
> And so, it was from nowhere that she came. And from her first sound and touch, to the last heavy loss of her weight when she went back to nowhere, he trusted her. He wasn't alone.
>
> They pulled him up. He galloped away (Dimetos, pp. 51-52).

Finally, in a consideration of Gnostic influences via Blake on Fugard, one cannot omit reference to the Gnostic correlation of elements--the earth, water, air and fire referred to in Dimetos' soliloquy--with primary emotions of terror, fear, grief and death respectively.

In Dimetos, Fugard concentrates on personalities and arguments; our attention is never distracted by scenic devices. His cryptic and challenging stage directions reflect his adherence to Grotowski's concept of poor theatre, the stage a space possessed primarily by actors rather than cluttered by unnecessary decor, enabling the characters to claim it "with immediate and total authority."[18] This concept is suited to the play's design of innumerable short scenes, eleven in Act I and six in Act II. The overall structure is that of the two-hander, the narrow focus so characteristic of Fugard the

dramatist, enabling him to explore and dissect action, interaction and reaction. Once again it is a restricted area of conflict that makes for intense and profound emotional and intellectual sparring. Rapid entrances and exits ensure the dominant presence of two characters centre stage, aware of and absorbed in their interdependent existence. There are a few notable exceptions such as the meal in Act I scene 6 at which all four characters are present. Yet even within that framework there is a division of interests resulting in mini "duets" within the ensemble, extended dialogue between the two men, or between Lydia and Danilo, or Lydia and Dimetos, with Sophia and Dimetos individually and periodically distancing themselves to observe trends of interplay. The scheme, sustained effectively throughout Act II, is further refined with a series of three brief monologues merely hinted at on one occasion in Act I, a technique that narrows the arena of action even further.

Whether intuitively selecting the mode expressive of his dramatic needs, or whether deliberately employing this technique to breed a heated yet fetid ambience within which his characters make restricted almost predestined moves, Fugard has employed a form that fortifies the content, achieving through design and pattern a correlation between situations and intentions, which result in the sense of inevitability that underlies the play. Never an arbitrary arrangement, it is rather an intricately patterned entity, dense in sustained imagery, with multiple meanings. The cyclical format in itself constitutes a philosophical statement on the unbroken circle of human love, whether incestuous or not--Dimetos' disembodied

voice that resonates down the well in the opening scene is balanced in the final sequence by Lydia's oracular utterances. The wheel has poignantly come full circle, the dominant position has been ceded, teacher and pupil have changed positions.

As in other Fugard plays, notably Statements After An Arrest Under The Immorality Act and "Master Harold"...and the boys, textbook quotations abound. Yet nowhere are they more fully integrated into the very nature of the play than in Dimetos in which the laws of physics and mathematics generate imagery central to the play's meaning as a whole. Superficially the scientific definitions appear to be appropriate to the persona of a renowned engineer. They are, however, pervasive and profound concepts intimately related to the central character's and the playwright's philosophical perspectives and contentions, as demonstrated at the beginning of this chapter. Gravity is a central theme in the play, the compelling force that irresistibly draws two people together, "a force whose direction is that of the line joining the two ..." (Dimetos, p. 7). It is coupled with a sense of predestination, the ineluctable destiny that awaited the ancient Greeks in their mythological cosmos. For Dimetos, his fatal love for his niece, Lydia, is as simple as gravity, as fundamental as the flowing and swelling of the sea, "The potential in all bodies to move or be moved" (Dimetos, p. 7).

In the scientific context, Dimetos the engineer succumbs to universal laws he recognizes as irresistible; whereas in mythological terms he would be viewed as a Promethean victim of Zeus' anger. Dimetos refers to a chain made for one of the

ships in the harbour, the craftsman forging "each link as if it was the one destined for Prometheus" (Dimetos, p. 24). The incorporation of Prometheus as a reference point is significant on many levels: the benefactor of mankind and the father of all the arts and science, he played an important role in the legendary history of the origins of humanity. Vandenbroucke traces the close parallel between Dimetos and the Prometheus Bound of Aeschylus: both given remote settings on the edge of the world, and both central figures were technologists, men of action rather than words. Prometheus was "as physically powerless as Dimetos was spiritually and emotionally impotent. The one struggles with Zeus on Olympus, the other with demons in his heart," Vandenbroucke cogently observes.[19] But this is not Prometheus Bound by Aeschylus despite Vandenbroucke's assertion that "of all Dimetos's dramatic ancestors, the Prometheus Bound of Aeschylus is so close Fugard might have had it in mind, if only subconsciously."[20] Fugard's central characters are rooted in realities on earth. With the exception of Miss Helen, whose dreams are translated into sparkling light, Fugard's people battle against political, social, emotional and intellectual odds within concrete frameworks. Despite a setting remote in space and time, Dimetos is no exception to this rule, preoccupied as he is with tangible objects and with construction. It is this emphasis on tools and machines, and on the power man derives from their use, that fuses with Fugard's exposition of the laws of physics and mathematics, and that combines to produce a universe governed by scientific principles. The universe of Dimetos manipulates him in as elemental a way as the moon causes the

ebb and flow of tides. His concern with the cause and effect of tidal motion dependent on the varying positions of the sun and moon (high tide twice daily when the moon and sun are aligned; and the phenomenon of smaller tides at full moon when the moon approximately counteracts the gravitational pull of the sun) is easily and naturally projected by the playwright onto a philosophical plane.

Dimetos implements mathematical formulae in a mechanical context. The machine, "a system of forces that could be controlled" (Dimetos, p. 22); an armoury of six mechanical powers, "lever, pulley, inclined plane, wedge, screw and wheel" (Dimetos, p. 17) enables man to defy the universe. A first order lever comprising force, fulcrum and weight, the second and third orders being variations on this theme, represent a technology which enables man to control his physical environment. The similarity between the lever and the tides, both comprising three units in different orders and with different effects, is posited and explored. Through Dimetos, Fugard progresses from one system to another, from the physical to the philosophical, from that which man controls to that beyond his control. The three components of the lever are analogous to natural phenomena beyond our control: the earth, sun and moon. If disrupted they function in an uncontrolled way, a situation which threatens Dimetos and partially contributes to his madness. With Lydia's death, the pivot, "That on which anything turns or depends ... the cardinal, central or vital point ..." (Dimetos, p. 51) is absent from his world. The metaphors of the lever and tidal movements and their extension to a philosophical level finds further

application in Danilo's summary of the final dilemma of Dimetos: "Behind him land and a world of men he would never return to, who didn't want him any more, had in fact finally forgotten him. And ahead of him the ocean, a world he could not enter ..." (Dimetos, p. 41). Again this is a juxtaposition of three elements with Dimetos as the pivotal point. Yet Dimetos is no longer able to effect significant changes in the world. Again there is the threat of a disrupted and uncontrolled state, the non-equilibrium of Dimetos' "last apprenticeship" (Dimetos, p. 42).

Fugard's canvas is broader here than in any other of his plays, stretching forwards to visionary panoramas and backwards to mythological prototypes. Dimetos perceives the city he has abandoned as "the creation of a modern Daedalus into which Theseus has gone without his ball of twine" (Dimetos, p. 22), a clearcut reference to the labyrinthine nature of the modern city and the absence of guidelines enabling man to escape. We remember that the legendary Theseus possessed the precious ball of thread which enabled him to find his way out of the labyrinth. Daedalus, who constructed the labyrinth, was an Athenian distinguished for ingenuity and cunning, a man with whom Dimetos would identify in professional and personal terms. It was Daedalus, too, who allegedly invented the axe and saw, and killed his nephew, a rival craftsman.[21]

Aside from the classical allusions to Prometheus, mythic overtones are echoed in Sophia's tortured reference to the place to which she imagines Lydia has gone:

> She keeps company with a donkey, an owl, a griffin, a bat and an old, million-year-old turtle. There is a terrible familiarity between herself and the entrance to hell, which is just behind her. She goes in and

out. She was waiting for me (Dimetos, p. 50).

In ancient mythologies an owl was noted for its wisdom and nocturnal habits; the griffin, a fabulous creature with the body and legs of a lion, the head and wings of an eagle, and listening ears, was emblematic of strength, agility and watchfulness, and believed by the Greeks to inhabit Scythia and to guard its gold; the donkey's head appeared on the Egyptian divinity, Set, and was venerated as a sacred animal; while in Indian mythology Vishnu assumed the form of a gigantic turtle that significantly became the "pivot" of a mountain.[22] Mythological overtones enhance and magnify Dimetos, who by association assumes a stature and status bigger than life. During rehearsals of Dimetos in London, Fugard took Yvonne Bryceland to the Tate Gallery to view Blake's colour print of Hecate. Bryceland's verbatim recall of the image of somebody at hell's gate goes a long way towards providing Sophia's description.[23]

Beside the specific mythological references there is also a sub-text of mythic thought and feeling in Dimetos, which, curiously, is spelled out by Sheila Fugard in her poem The Mythic Things: "The graven mythic things are / Water knotted as in the sea."[24] The seal emerging like primeval life from the sea only to die on the rocks, triggering as it does so Dimetos' madness, is again poignantly reflected in her poetry:

> The sea is an enemy who preserves
> A face of violence done to things
>
> My mind is disturbed and unhinged
> The sea is my unsound element now.[25]

Aspects of Dimetos' tone and philosphy are reflected in the poetry contained in Mythic Things and the writer of this

thesis suggests that it be read as a commentary and supplement to Dimetos. As Sheila Fugard notes in lines that invite comparison with themes in her husband's play:

> The sea is the law giver and witness
> Of my duress and final transformation.
> ....
> I rouse the ocean and its displeasure,
> Summons a host of goddesses of dark water.
> These sea riding women of passion explain
> The process of birth and death and birth
> The primordial innocence that I lose ....[26]

It is the "primordial innocence" in Sheila Fugard's poem and the "Primordial beauty"[27] detected in the seal by Fugard that Lydia loses in her violent encounter with Danilo. Lydia appears as an unselfconscious child of nature, not unlike Miranda in Shakespeare's The Tempest, on a metaphorical island of isolation. She is oblivious of her own sexuality, its impact on others or the "sexual menace which underlies Dimetos."[28] It is significant that Fugard dedicated the play to his daugher Lisa, for father/daughter love and trust and its consequent betrayal are central concerns of the play. It is important, too, to bear in mind, that Dimetos is both uncle and surrogate father to Lydia and their relationship therefore is not without potentially incestuous overtones. Vandenbroucke argues that Dimetos is not a pathological study of incest and passion, that Lydia "can no longer live because her uncle has betrayed their relationship by failing, in her eyes, to protect her."[29] Yet there are other issues predisposing Lydia to suicide, that Vandenbroucke fails to comment on.

Clearly Lydia is an adolescent negotiating the journey towards adulthood, moving from being a secure member of a "family" to being an autonomous, responsible adult. At one

level she has a collaborative relationship with Dimetos, a non-parental adult: "You've earned the right to call me Dimetos now. It was the voice, the demand of a colleague, and equal. Dimetos and Lydia" he tells her (Dimetos, p. 8).

Yet her socializing experience is abnormally restricted in their isolated locality and consequently decisions about morals and sexuality have been deferred unnaturally. A sexual creature (we are made aware of this in explicit terms as, naked, she straddles the horse, a male symbol), she nonetheless lacks the necessary information to prepare for the sexual interest she inevitably arouses. Sophia fails to communicate with her in a supportive and meaningful way. We note that the nature of initial sexual awareness and particularly the first sexual experience are held to be crucial for adolescent sexual health. Sexually inexperienced, Lydia has the encounter with Danilo which pains and shocks her profoundly. It lowers her self-esteem and precipitates her towards suicide as an escape from an intolerable situation. This is an ego-centric response to what should be a crisis encountered by the whole family. But Lydia's mute withdrawal and despondency, vital behavioural clues, fail to alert Sophia or Dimetos to her plans. Sophia, selfishly immersed in her love for Dimetos and relieved that it was not he who assaulted Lydia, fails to support the girl or to convey adequately a sense of caring. She fails to restore Lydia's faith in the future. Lydia, alone in coping with the emotional consequences of her sexual encounter, suffers depression and diminished self-esteem. Unable to adjust to the stressful situation, suicide is her only option. Her brief life story is intertwined with that of the horse falling down

the well, the animal which she perceives as an innocent and ignorant victim of life's traps. "You didn't know that men make holes in the world. You thought it was safe. So you trusted it" she concludes bitterly (Dimetos, p. 37). From Lydia's perspective the horse is a metaphor not only for freedom but also for misplaced trust in a hostile world full of unseen perils. For Dimetos, however, the horse is viewed exclusively as a sexual symbol. The horse and rider join in coital communion: "Two bodies separate and yet mysteriously at one with each other" (Dimetos, p. 28). From Dimetos' perspective, it is logical to deduce a further meaning: the horse plunging into the well may represent man's thrusting phallic connection with mother earth, or even a kind of rape. Dimetos aligns himself with the horse as male sexuality. At the same time he is aware of its potential for wounding Lydia. Different and distinct meanings reinforce one another to fuse finally in Dimetos' desire to possess Lydia, a desire presented in veiled imagery: "his desire to possess her was so great that that night he dreamt his hooves turned into hands" (Dimetos, p. 52).

As Vandenbroucke points out, "none of Fugard's previous characters is as obsessed with hands as Dimetos."[30] In previous plays the clenched hand communicated a violent response to life, as in Boesman and Lena, whereas the open hand was an image of giving and trust. In Dimetos Fugard explores a broad range of connotations. There is, for instance, Sophia's observation on Dimetos' hands: "That's what naughty boys do. I had to smack yours once or twice for that, remember?" (Dimetos, p. 47), a clear reference to a child's tendency to

masturbate. Dimetos' hands therefore are more than those of an engineer attempting and achieving difficult technical feats. They are suffused with sexuality that becomes obsessive as his alienation from society deepens. As Sheila Fugard notes:

> Hands are the tools
> Hands are the power
> Lay them upon earth.[31]

Part of Dimetos' tragedy is the loss of manual expertise and dexterity. He begins to "fidget and fiddle" (Dimetos, p. 47), his hands expressing the guilt that weighs on his conscience. They are an index of inner turbulence, conveying a retrogression from competent professional to madman unable to order the universe. The disintegration of his mind and personality, reflected in the actions of his hands, can be partly ascribed to his inability to relate emotionally to the world devoid of Lydia. "Do you know what bridges that mysterious distance between head and hands, bringing them so close together that they are almost one? Caring" (Dimetos, p. 17), he tells Sophia. His former philosophy of life: "Head, hands, and heart" (Dimetos, p. 17), another variant on the lever principle, is disrupted. The physics of the engineer and the metaphysics of a philosopher are finally resolved in the image of the juggler, who learns to give and take in the same action. The empty hands of beggars, the calloused hands of workmen, the firm hands of the potter and the blacksmith, Sophia's hands as they brush Lydia's hair and Dimetos' hands changing ropes and pulleys, are single facets of a truth comprehensively expressed in Fugard's image of a juggler with which the play ends:

> Close that powerful hand on a thing. Yours. Hold it! The act of defiance man has made his creed. The

> mortal human hold! Now give it away. Don't be frightened. Only to your other hand. It will still be yours. That's right. Hold it. Tight. That was a terrible second when they were both empty. One still is. Find something. Quickly! Now comes the hard part ... so listen carefully. Each must give what it has got to the other, at the same time. You must give and take with the same action (Dimetos, p. 52).

Fugard's vision of the juggler has a sacramental significance allied to biblical injunctions such as cast thy bread upon the waters, or, it is as blessed to give as to receive. Once again a generative image dominates the play, that of a man with outstretched hands disciplining himself to let go, to release that which he would possess and to wait in the belief that it will return. It is a lesson learned by Dimetos and Fugard's audiences, who, in turn, confront and respond to the madman with hands outstretched in applause.

Walder dismisses this final gesture as "pathetic, rather than profound or tragic," a white South African "attempting to escape the burden of the present by indulging in fantasies" about a "tribal" society in which the "traditional" order ensures harmony and security.[32] The writer of this thesis believes this is a mis-reading of the play's climax. If Dimetos is not a mythical Greek, neither is he an Afrikaner. After the 1976 London production, theatre critic Ned Chaillet perceptively commented that "Scofield follows the logic of science with his arms, finally crucifying himself on the complicated geometry."[33] In production a redemptive note is sounded, a messianic meaning in the midst of madness, the triumph of the artist over the artisan, the retreat of the engineer and the emergence of the storyteller whose craft may be viewed as yet another sublime variant of the principle of the lever: a beginning, a

fulcrum and an end. Fugard elevates the visionary, affirming Blake's belief that "art was the tree of life, and science the tree of death."[34] As Vandenbroucke points out, to Blake the machines of the industrial revolution "threatened to supplant the imagination."[34a] It is the triumph of the visionary over the industrialist that Fugard celebrates.

It is the men who espouse the materialistic, mechanical disciplines, whereas the women, both Sophia and Lydia before their contamination by male passions, evince suspicion of these concepts and propagate values of a different order. When Dimetos speaks of "Caring" (Dimetos, p. 17) he really means commitment to the projects at hand. It is Sophia who speaks of the heart and together with Lydia she devises a game, finding ten things of beauty to get to heaven, their aesthetics an antidote to the Blakean nightmare of single vision technology. It is a game played twice, the first time it is joyous, lyrical and mutually rewarding, a time of personal harmony between two women; the second occasion the game is hollow, mechanical, muted and in strong contrast to their former blithe spirits. Apprehensive and troubled, they abandon the game, presciently aware of the violence that subsequently erupts and shatters their peace. Their game is an extension of their relationship, the playful spontaneity of two women happy in idyllic seclusion. The disruption of their game reveals a shift and realignment of loyalties and loves. Unlike the games played by George and Martha in Edward Albee's Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?,[35] the Humiliate the Host, Hump the Hostess and Get the Guests games that maliciously lacerate, provoke and enrage; Fugard's games in Dimetos are pitched at an aesthetic level of

beauty, a subtle attempt to infuse the lives of Sophia and Lydia with hope. It is the technique of those who believe in each other, another facet in a relationship of trust, faith and belief. Once that balance is disturbed by extraneous forces, their attempt to play their game is a travesty of what it should be. Once an exercise in faith and love, it fails as the players flounder in a morass of threatening emotions. In content and intention it differs radically from games played by Danilo and Dimetos, intellectual and verbal sparring of a devious nature: "We're playing games with each other Dimetos" states an exasperated Danilo. "I don't know whether you are lying to me or yourself" (Dimetos, p. 25). As pressure mounts and his derangement progresses, Dimetos engages in yet another game:

> The little waves were lively, full of surprise. Almost as if the sea wanted to play. I thought maybe that that innocence was still possible. So I threw it my name. The waves will break it up and tomorrow, after high tide, I'll pick up the pieces (Dimetos, p. 39).

It is as if Dimetos through this game attempts to expiate and exorcise his guilt, a symbolic ritual profoundly reminiscent of the Jewish tashlich ceremony performed on the first afternoon of the New Year, an act rooted in years of tradition. The name tashlich derives from the verse in Micah chapter seven verse nineteen: "And Thou will cast All their sins into the Depth of the Sea." Kabbalists, Jewish mystics, shake their garments as a way of freeing themselves from the "shells" of sin, which have formed during the year. Their act is based on the Talmudic statement that the cleanliness of garments is a sign of purity.[36]

Vicariously, Dimetos immerses himself in the cleansing water, hoping for a restructured name, a new identity. He plays yet another game, fiddling with shells and stones obsessively in a deranged attempt to create a meaningful pattern (Dimetos, p. 48). Sophia reminds Dimetos that shells and stones spell his name: "Don't you remember. They spell D-I-M-E-T-O-S" (Dimetos, p. 48), a sequence that in mood, structure and content reflects Fugard's preoccupation with spelling and the sea in Orestes, devised four years earlier:

> YW: Let's dream about the sea!
> YW: How do you spell Orestes?
> W: O-R-E-S-T-E-S.[37]

Names spewed from the sea signal a rebirth, as if the name, symbolic of existence, emerges pristine or purified from an oceanic source of life.

Evasiveness is an important characteristic of Dimetos, an inability or unwillingness to identify precisely the nature of his malaise. "My God, are we still frightened of her [Lydia's] name" Sophia cries (Dimetos, p. 45). In Fugard's world where names also indicate possession, Dimetos' reluctance to refer directly to his deceased niece reveals guilt and fear of confronting hidden desires and unnatural longings directly and indirectly responsible for the disintegration of all he and Sophia hold dear. Sophia's response to the prevailing odour of death and decay is an existential one. She is overwhelmed, as were Hester and Lena, by Sartrean nausea; "even thinking makes me want to vomit" she tells Dimetos (Dimetos, p. 48). Not unlike Lady Macbeth desperately aware that "all the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand," she crushes lemon leaves in an effort to disguise the stench of the rotting carcass,

vainly attempting to alleviate the pain of their collective guilt. In an ending reminiscent of ancient Greek tragedies in which affronted gods of the universe demand restitution from erring humans for their flouting of divine laws, the rotting carcass is seen by Sophia as punishment: "What an end. They survived their own consciences and other men's stoning, but were suffocated to death by the stench of a carcass" (Dimetos, p. 48). It is a phenomenon Sophia cannot and Dimetos will not control despite her pleas to do so. He has lost control over his environment and his mind. The rotting sea mammal merges in his mind with the corpse of his beloved niece, assuming one aspect. It is his punishment, the justice Danilo refers to as "a fundamental law of the universe" (Dimetos, p. 44), retribution on a scale commensurate with the crime.

As in his other plays, Fugard focuses on single words that resonate themes throughout the work, words central to the narrative development and emotional range, words that provide a key to the playwright's personal perspective and philosophy. There is the juxtaposition of "vision" and "profit" (Dimetos, p. 25), thereby contrasting Dimetos' realism and Danilo's fading idealism. "A few old cranks and their young followers still keep that word [vision] alive. The rest of us muddle along as best we can" Danilo tells Dimetos (Dimetos, p. 43). "Progress," too, is a dirty word in the eyes of Sophia, who views massive concrete construction schemes as soulless (Dimetos, p. 23), whereas for Danilo they are a thrust forward to the future. In this and other instances a single word illuminates areas separating characters from one another. The word "solstice" that Dimetos focuses on with meticulous

philological attention, provides a key to thought, feeling and action: "From sol, meaning sun, and sistere, to stand still. The day the sun stood still. So did I" he tells Lydia (Dimetos, p. 36).

It is truly a solstitial time for him and Lydia, a culminating and turning point in their lives. It intertwines with and reinforces an early impression recorded by Danilo, who, impressed with a superbly constructed wall, noted: "That wall isn't made of stone. Fear. That's why it's still there. A monument to man's capacity to stand still" (Dimetos, p. 12). Was Dimetos paralysed into immobility by fear of his voyeuristic desires? These questions lurk in the play's sub-text. There is the controversial word "servant" that erupts between Sophia and Dimetos. "Where does that word come from suddenly?" he asks. "I've never called you or thought of you as that" (Dimetos, p. 29). It focuses on Sophia's crisis of identity, one that is only finally resolved at the end of the play when she comprehends her part in Dimetos' destiny as his "fate" (Dimetos, p. 41) not his "servant." There are "strong words" used by Dimetos (Dimetos, p. 15) intended as comment on his withdrawal from the city, that unintentionally on the part of Dimetos but intentionally on the part of Fugard foreshadow searing themes. "Desertion does more than just terminate a loyalty, Sophia. It makes a lie of whatever loyalty there had been" he says (Dimetos, p. 15), as apt a reference to their abandonment of Lydia in her crisis as it is a summary of his withdrawal from the city. As skillfully as Fugard wields words, so does he exploit resources of language generally, revealing great technical expertise. Anaphora, the marked

repetition of a word or phrase in successive clauses or sentences, creates insistent rhythms:

> Lydia who was it?
> I saw a marvellous dragonfly ...
> Lydia please ... Who was it?
> Remember our funny little chicken ...
> Lydia, who was it! (Dimetos, p. 35).

It is a haunting pattern used to great effect in Dimetos' plangent soliloquy on elemental tidal forces, the word "Lydia" punctuating the phrases with pain and passion (Dimetos, p. 46).

However successfully Fugard manipulates language in his plays, it is human dilemmas that dominate. In Dimetos Fugard deals successfully with a complex and distorted intrafamilial relationship. Lydia, the victim of voyeurism and near-rape, is extremely vulnerable, deprived as she is of family support at the time of the event. She cannot resolve negative feelings of shame, humiliation and fear through discussion that might have proved cathartic. In the absence of a support system, she kills herself. Deep psychological disturbances result in a pattern of disorganisation and the further withdrawal of Dimetos and Sophia from society. Fugard subtly stigmatises Dimetos as a voyeur, obtaining sexual gratification by observing others engaging in sexual activity. His is not explicit incestuous contact with Lydia, yet their lifestyle involves close physical and emotional contact that is obviously potentially so. Assuming responsibility in Act II for events does not solve antecedent family problems; his thoughts and feelings are too chaotic to respond on a positive level to Danilo's confrontation and intervention. Dimetos may tear himself apart but he cannot rebuild. Like the sea, he is "a

clever but mad craftsman," a form without a function (Dimetos, p. 40).

There is an overall and unresolved ambiguity in the play. When Sophia cries: "If I could tell you ... If you could help me ... I loved Dimetos" (Dimetos, p. 50), there is uncertainty whether the cri de coeur is hers alone or belongs also to her image of Lydia as a mythical Hecate guarding Hell's entrance. Is Dimetos' "anguished preoccupation with himself and the meaning of his life"[38] an indictment of the technological society or a personal struggle to come to terms with himself in a guilt situation, or both? Such ambiguity adds to the mystery of a theatrical work that challenges the viewer/reader and defies the imposition of facile definitions. Like Blake's, whose quotation so aptly prefaces the play, Fugard's philosophy, visions, insight and technique are his own. Dimetos certainly marks a step into different terrain for the playwright and unfamiliar territory for his audiences. "The time had come to travel,"[39] Fugard noted.

It is arguable whether Fugard travelled far enough in Dimetos on his own journey of personal exploration. After the London season of Dimetos, he returned home and three months later he wrote: "Dimetos is not yet completed."[40] It was a reference not to format and content alone but also to likely consequences. With Dimetos Fugard placed contemporary western values on trial. The failures of his characters mirror the shortcomings of their society.

But it is not entirely a panorama of despair. There are signposts everywhere, directions given by a playwright with a gift for vision. Dimetos suffers the malaise of modern man.

In a technocratic society he is sick in spirit and mind, unable to sustain relationships with those who love him. Yet Fugard leaves us with a final image of a man, having suffered sorrow and madness, reaching anew towards redemptive possibilities. "Hold them out, and wait ..." (Dimetos, p. 53) are the last words spoken by Dimetos, words that embody Fugard's courage and optimism in the face of seemingly overwhelming nihilistic forces of the twentieth century.

It will by now be patently clear that the writer of this thesis subscribes to the view that Dimetos is Fugard's major, though misunderstood, work. Contemplating temporality and eternity might partially have undermined Dimetos' sanity; that he returns from his travels and travails still eager for illumination is a tribute to the tenacity of purpose of his creator, who upholds for all to see the credo of an artist. Dimetos' last soliloquy is a summary in metaphors of mankind's development through centuries of trial and torment. Within his final composite image of the juggler, there is an element of the conjurer's legerdemain which implies "a new dexterity of the wrist, but also of the soul" (Dimetos, p. 13). Fugard has rallied his resources for this moment when man teeters on the brink of his world but is nonetheless ready to receive new revelations. Through Dimetos Fugard has achieved self-recognition. Behind Dimetos lies corruption and ahead there is truth. Amid the growing chaos of his life Dimetos clearly discerned that caring was "the Alchemist's Stone of human endeavour" (Dimetos, p. 17). Roszak points out that according to Hermetic lore the philosopher's stone was hidden in the waste and offal of the world where it could best bear witness

to the universality of the divine.[41] That Fugard cares and that he has faced the breakdown and putrefaction of modern man's body and soul are beyond doubt. But like the alchemist of old, it is in dross that he finds his philosopher's stone. What began in corruption holds the possibility of ending in redemption. In Dimetos Fugard has integrated Newton's single vision into his own.

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9. Conclusion

Athol Fugard's creative work is his attempt to spell out the mystery encompassed by Life. His spectrum includes not only dominant experiences but recessive traits, major and minor modes of existence. If no issue is too large--one remembers the metaphysical preoccupations of Dimetos--neither are there entities too small for his observation, analysis and interpretation. One night in February 1977 a small insect crawled onto a white paper in front of him and he examined it through a watchmaker's eye-glass. "I saw a symmetry, a complexity that took my breath away," he wrote. "For the rest of my life it will leave me stumbling over cobwebs as if they had been made of fencing wire."[1] It is this sentiment of awe, the mirabile dictu of an artist/naturalist that he translates superbly into the life view dominant in his plays, works that for all their emotional squalor of character and situation resound with beauty and hope. Recording the wonder of that encounter with the insect, Fugard noted that his special pleasure was "an unending stream of life from the darkness" that flew through the open window to his light.[2] It is an effective metaphor for his life's work: through the light of artistic intuition and perception he discerns forms, shapes and meaning in the darkness that swathes the world. The truths he discerns are his own, structured as images that radiate with authority and power through his plays. For a playwright who

frequently asserts that "A man must have a Secret,"[3] his plays constitute a definitive act of generosity. They impart and reflect the artist's psyche. Jung wrote that the shared secret serves as cement binding the tribe together.[4] Theatregoers viewing Fugard's plays are initiated into his world view. His is a singular vision, one oftentimes at variance with the conformity encouraged in his country.

Gifted in his ability to select words and formulate imagery, Fugard is motivated by a dira necessitas. Driven by his daimon, or fate, Fugard progresses from charted, defined routes, recognizable landmarks and familiar milestones of the Port Elizabeth plays to the untrodden regions explored in Dimetos and The Road to Mecca.

As a writer probing the pain and the passion, he shows courage in leaving safe areas to explore new territory. His travels through Life entail ontological alienation, the existential dilemma of modern man. His visionaries, philosophers and artists--Marais, Dimetos, Miss Helen--stand isolated and alone, in all probability they are mirrors of his current world view and form its exegesis. It is not the task of the writer of this thesis to predict future patterns of development, yet it would seem that Fugard's future work must surely focus on philosophical ideas. Yet characteristically, any questions he asks, or answers he formulates, will be contained in the dramatic details of lives lived here and now. However abstracted the philosophical considerations, the specifics remain. Shortly after completing Dimetos, Fugard wrote "Go into the word"[5] and the word consistently remains his basic building block. Philip Segal noted that

words in literature act as a glass bringing to us experience made intense to burning-point, revealing hidden complexities within every moment of life. He wrote:

> words are one of our main means of contemplating life. They constitute a 'technique' of meditation, for they rescue everyday life from its mechanical pattern, its superficial evaluations, from the almost permanent evasion of seriousness and truth in our normal relationships with people, good and evil.[6]

Fugard's words radiate emotions, thoughts, sensations and visions in the manner envisioned by Segal. "The only truth any man can tell is his own," wrote Fugard in 1976.[7] Through the plays he externalises his inner truth, thereby purifying his spirit and through theatrical catharsis cleansing the collective soul of his audience. Fugard's art arguably unleashes forces his audiences recognize with shock as their own subconscious demons. Is the catharsis sustained beyond the dramatic experience? Can art influence life and effect desirable changes in humanitarian and socio-political terms? Does the agony of South African history, the suffering of apartheid's victims, result in tangible steps forward towards the liberation of the underdog? Fugard's theatre of defiance has consistently aroused the national conscience. His audiences have been and continue to be, deeply moved by his plays and consequently accept moral responsibility for the deplorable human condition he defines. With every performance Fugard sows a seed that germinates amid the moral depravity of a wasteland created by a legalised system of discrimination, just as Fugard once noted a common garden weed, lodged in a crack in a urinal, could grow into a healthy young plant.[8]

"Art is no substitute for life," wrote Fugard. "It

operates on top of life--rendering experience meaningful, enhancing experience."[9] Elsewhere, however, he recognizes the artist's imperative to write if only for the sake of those who believe in human dignity. "Art can impart faith," he concludes.[10] His plays, their flesh, blood, sweat, pain, laughter and tears, enlighten, instruct and deeply affect those who listen to Fugard's all too human voice. "We need to make a noise,"[11] he stated simply in words that echo Milly's desire to be heard and seen by the pageant of humanity passing her door. It is a noise calculated to:

> get people to think and feel for themselves, that will stop them delegating these functions to the politicians .... Theatre can help to do this. There is nothing John Balthazar Vorster and his Cabinet would like more than to keep us isolated from the ideas and values which are current in the free Western world.[12]

If the noise made by Fugard's characters is significant, so are the silences, the unwritten, unspoken meanings that pulsate through his sub-texts, illuminating spaces rich in content between his lines. As Fugard told Almeda K. Rae, his words acted as "a thin, frozen crust to a deeper, darker reality. The ice on a pond."[13] If Fugard viewed Boesman and Lena as acting rather than speaking, then the poetic economy of Dimetos highlights the process of movement away from the actual word into the sub-text of the subconscious. "Now I'm going to leave you," Sophia tells Lydia,[14] a simple phrase that belies the enormity of her abandonment, her desertion of Lydia caught up in an adolescent crisis of sexual molestation and family betrayal. Lydia's world ends not with a bang or a whimper but in the silence of complicity and it is moments such as these that stun the sensitivities of audiences, enabling them to

grasp the essential isolation, pain and loneliness of Fugard's creatures. "Only a fraction of my truth is in the words," Fugard wrote,[15] drawing attention to the dramatic strength inherent in his silences. Through words, actions and silence Fugard depicts the drought afflicting the land and soul of man, his conscious experience of loss and deprivation, his search for affirmation, belief and love.

Water has a religious connotation for Fugard. A man literally and figuratively close to the soil, with a botanist's knowledge of plants, a scientist's enquiring mind and a true patriot's love of his drought-striken land, Fugard has been aware of the life-giving role of water. It assumes a ritualistic meaning in his plays. Its punitive absence in A Lesson from Aloes destroys the veld and mutilates the mind; its presence, like the river that flows unceasingly through Tsotsi's buried memories, generates recall and life, absolving man from guilt and sin; while the sea in Dimetos is not only the oceanic origin of life and the home of revengeful monsters, but also a vast collective unconscious girdling the world. It is a vital unit in Fugard's range of imagery that spans the outer and inner worlds of man. His fascination with the delicacy and mortal beauty of butterflies, "A bright scrap of time dancing unconcerned on the face of eternity,"[16] finds an echo in poignant and dramatic imagery suffusing The Blood Knot: "We've driven into a flock of butterflies. You remember, hey! We've found it, Zach. We've found it! This is our youth!"[17] Woven into the poetic imagery of his plays, Fugard's personal observations are transmuted to truths for all men. For his truths to breathe and live they require actors and audiences. He is the

quintessential actor/director/playwright, conscious of the stage, its limitations and potential. For him the stage is the arena where life's battles are fought, where conflicts are resolved and philosophical perspectives established. Above all it is "sacred space" within which the playwright defines man's suffering: the point of departure so necessary for witnessing. The script, its performance and audience response are all required to blend in an experience leading to heightened awareness. It aligns playwright, actor and audience in loyalty to life's survivors.

With the exception of Lydia in Dimetos, his characters never betray life itself. They bemoan their lot, deplore conditions and resent their fates; yet affirm their desire to love and their recognition of life's beauty. It is an affirmation consistent with Fugard's personal celebration of life in all its facets, in the sea, wind, birdsong, the "dulcet chorus of frogs,"[18] flowers in the veld and "our wonderful winds,"[19] a powerful antidote to depression and pessimism. It highlights, too, Fugard's autobiographical use of the accidents of his own life, not only the inclusion of tangible objects such as the kite Sam Semela made for him as a child but also emotional complexities and intellectual challenges inherent in his own lifestyle. This semi-confessional tendency was covertly evident in the early Family plays which explored the nexus of interpersonal relationships--the fraternal bond in Blood Knot, parent/child in Hello and Goodbye, and parent/parent in Boesman and Lena--and overtly in Master Harold. It is a process that dictates not only acute awareness of the histrionic potential within living moments in the

artist's life but through their transmutation into theatrical realities an ongoing, constant and subtle process of defining and refining life's raw material, with due regard always to values embedded in the plays and communicated responsibly to audiences. Fugard's temperament as artist and his role as dramatist have involved movement between two poles of awareness. "I watch and am watched--I examine the experience and I experience," he wrote.[20] He focuses on those personal elements in which he discerns all humanity. Ultimately it is the human condition with which he concerns himself. Especially through his earlier plays, Fugard discovers, as do his audiences, the brotherhood of man. It is only in his works such as The Guest, Dimetos and Mecca that he deals with aberrant, alienated intellectuals who evade society's tentacles and withdraw to positions of physical and intellectual isolation: Marais locked in a room and in his thoughts, Dimetos on a remote beach and Miss Helen closeted within her sanctuary. It is at this point that one should address the controversial critical question raised by Vandenbroucke concerning the South African context of Fugard's work. Vandenbroucke posits the view that as a regional writer who uses details of a specific time and place to explore general conflicts and quandaries, region is merely a starting point and locus, a metaphor rather than the subject itself. "Race," writes Vandenbroucke, "is only one component of the human condition; the suffering and degradation rife throughout Fugard's work is, finally, a poetic image of the plight of all men."[21] Vandenbroucke, whose book is the most recent and comprehensive evaluation by a single author of Fugard's work as dramatist, alleges that the

importance of Fugard's nationality has been exaggerated:

> For far too long, critics and audience have mistakenly equated the South African context of Fugard's plays with their ultimate subject and have thereby emphasised the specifics with which he starts rather than the universal with which he ends.[22]

The critical and dramatic truth would appear to fall somewhere between the polarities of regionalism and universalism. Fugard assumes responsibility for the other man, who, with a few notable exceptions, happens to be South African. The mud between Lena's toes is the mud of Swartkops and she is as physically rooted in that landscape as Fugard's heart and soul are entrenched in the South African milieu. With Camus he can exclaim: "This earth remains my first and last love."[23] It is not to be confused with "a broad hatred and a narrow love" of Gide's definition of nationalism.[24]

Fugard's lifelong desire has been to put down roots in places where he understands the code, however repressive conditions might be. His statements about iniquities in his beloved land have afforded western playgoers searing glimpses of the country's agonies, torments bred in a specific place at a specific time. Pico Iyer wrote that "Fugard's eloquent dramas turn upon the moral and emotional conundrums facing whites who wish to choose the right way."[25] For Fugard, as for the modern generation of angry young black playwrights in South Africa, theatre and politics are indistinguishable, the one a comment on the other. "Every time I touch a pen I think about my situation," said Maishe Maponya in an interview. "We must say things you don't normally hear."[26] Their arena might be the same, their stated concerns similar, but Fugard is not and never has been only a political polemicist. He is first and

foremost a dramatic storyteller. As a South African his stories have been mirrors of a tormented society and a crucified national psyche.

Whereas the flood of township plays released recently, especially the Woza Africa series seen in New York and Washington in 1986, dwell unremittingly with photographic realism on the blood, torture and death convulsing black ghettos throughout South Africa, Fugard shows the bruises rather than the blows. His material, selected, coherent and organized, stimulates rather than satiates audience response and provokes identification on cerebral-emotional levels. Fugard does not consciously pose questions, neither do his plays provide answers. They reflect the anguish of humanity, deprived of fulfilment, conscious of loss and frightened of death. Throughout his plays Fugard repetitively cites the image of a fist possessively clenched onto life. His plays are a potent attempt to relax that grip, to give of ourselves, to call our neighbour's name, to witness life's painful pageant and to redeem through love mankind's ineffable anguish and sorrow.

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Notes:

1. Primary sources are listed in a chronological sequence by date of completion of first writing. Texts cited are those for this thesis.

2. Secondary sources are listed alphabetically by author.

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